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Alfredo Ramirez, Jr.

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**PRINCIPALS' ACTIONS IN THE PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL
SYSTEM FOR TEACHERS IN SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS IN TEXAS**

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SYSTEM FOR TEACHERS IN SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS IN TEXAS**

by

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Dedication

To my wife, Melissa Chapa, for her unconditional love and support throughout this project and to my daughter, Gabriela Ramirez, who was born at the time I was conducting this study. Her birth awoke strong powers and deep feelings within me that I never knew existed.

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**PRINCIPALS' ACTIONS IN THE PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEM
FOR TEACHERS IN SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS IN TEXAS**

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The purpose of this study was to identify elementary, middle, and high school principals' perceptions regarding their instructional leadership actions in the performance appraisal of teachers in successful schools in Texas. The focus was on instructional leadership actions that serve to enhance efforts at improving teaching and learning through a comprehensive teacher evaluation system in Texas.

The research design was a multiple case study that included one elementary school, one middle school, and one high school within the same school district to identify the actions of principals with regard to the performance appraisal system for teachers in Texas at effective schools.

Findings of the study revealed that principals in successful schools in Texas use comprehensive teacher evaluation systems as a basis for improving instruction by

monitoring instruction, tying annual campus staff development and training activities to the PDAS, and implementing and integrating a multi-year teacher evaluation process. While their approach was varied, several commonalities emerged from the cross-site analysis. The principals utilized the comprehensive teacher evaluation system to provide support to teachers in need of assistance, as a summative tool, monitor instruction, provide staff development and training opportunities for teachers, set clear expectations, and to ensure compliance with policies and procedures in the district.

The findings of this study are consistent with and expand the literature regarding effective instructional leadership and comprehensive teacher evaluation systems. Furthermore, the study is congruent with the finding that scholars and practioners are conceiving of teacher evaluation systems as vehicles for the improvement of both teaching and learning (Iwanicki, 1998; Sowell, 1993; Cardno, 1995; Stronge, 1997; Ovando, 2001). This study confirmed the claims of the above mentioned scholars and extended their findings by describing those specific leadership actions that principals exercise in the performance appraisal of teachers. More importantly, findings suggest that principals, indeed, use the performance appraisal system as a basis to improve instruction.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

For the past several decades, the public school accountability movement has gained strong momentum in America. This movement has caused the creation and the sustainability of accountability structures for almost every area of the American public school educational system. Some of these areas include: (a) student performance, (b) teacher preparation programs as well as teacher certification requirements, (c) special program accountability such as Special Education as well as other federal programs, (d) school fiscal equity, (e) teacher performance appraisal systems, and (f) principal leadership at all levels. These are only some of the areas which have been impacted by the accountability movement in the United States.

As a result of the accountability movement, which has placed great emphasis upon almost every single factor that impacts student academic achievement, researchers have become increasingly interested in the school principal's actions and leadership skills which researchers have found to have both a direct and indirect positive impact upon student academic achievement. In a recent study of instructional leadership, Cavazos (1999) claims that, "the general pattern of the results drawn from the literature supports the belief that principals exercise a measurable effect on school effectiveness and student achievement" (p. 1). In addition, Cavazos (1999) also claims that this 'measurable effect' is achieved through both a narrow and broad conceptualization of principals' leadership actions. In the broad theoretical framework, principals' instructional leadership is defined as all those actions which principals carry out as part

of their duties including routine managerial tasks and which have a measurable effect upon student learning. One such task includes the performance appraisal of teachers.

The accountability movement has had significant implications in performance appraisal systems for teachers. According to Ovando (2001), “the current accountability demands represent a challenge for schools that aim to achieve academic success for all students through a comprehensive teacher evaluation system. Therefore, teacher evaluation requires immediate attention from school leaders” (p. 213). For example, policy-makers, state education officials, university professors, researchers, and experts have all recognized the need and the importance of creating and utilizing comprehensive teacher evaluation systems as mechanisms for the improvement of teaching and learning. Ovando (2001), offers the Miami-Dade County Public Schools’ implementation of the Professional Assessment and Comprehensive Evaluation System (PACES) as one example of a recent adoption of a comprehensive teacher evaluation system designed to improve both teaching and learning. Furthermore, in 1997, the Texas State Legislature enacted legislation requiring the creation of a comprehensive teacher performance appraisal system designed to improve both teaching and learning. This state policy required Texas Education Agency officials to develop the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS) for public school teachers in Texas.

As a result of the accountability movement, which has had significant implications for all those factors that ultimately impact student achievement such as principal instructional leadership behaviors and performance appraisal systems for teachers, a need has emerged for more specific research studies into the leadership

actions of principals and the integration of performance appraisal systems. Currently, research is broad and general regarding teacher evaluation systems. Thus, there is a need for more focused research regarding the perceptions of principals on the actions of the school principal in the integration of teacher evaluation models at the local campus level for several reasons. For example, according to Cavazos (1999), “a limitation of previous research regarding principal leadership, however, is the need for further description of the means by which principals achieve an impact on school and student outcomes within certain contextual forces that influence school leadership, such as student diversity and grade level” (Cavazos, 1999; p. 3). In addition to these contextual forces, research on the effective implementation of comprehensive teacher evaluation systems will enhance current research regarding the description of the means by which principals achieve an impact on school and student outcomes within certain contextual forces that influence school leadership. This research project aims to contribute to research in this “field” of study.

In addition to the need for future research regarding the leadership actions that directly or indirectly impact student achievement, future research should expand the need to focus on the principal’s actions regarding appraisal systems for teachers’ evaluations, as well as to determine the impact of those actions upon student academic achievement for several reasons. A review of the literature reveals at least five reasons for the need for future research. First, researchers argue that little has been said from a principal’s perspective about the growing problem on inadequate teachers (Hord, 1992; Boyd, 1992). Secondly, the growing complexity of the principalship causing a lack of

time to perform effective teacher evaluations points to the need for further research in this area. The effects of principals in evaluations coupled with the need for administrators training regarding effective teacher evaluation techniques all point to the need for further research (Andrews, et al., 1986; Bamburg & Andrews, 1991; Brewer, 1993; Cheng, 1994; Cruz, 1995; Goldring & Pasternak, 1994; Hallinger, et al., 1996; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Heck, et al., 1990).

Statement of the Problem

Policy-makers, state education officials, researchers, and educators have recognized the need to implement state and national accountability systems aimed at improving teaching and learning in today's public schools. One of the systems that the above mentioned public school education stakeholders have recognized as critical is comprehensive teacher evaluation systems. While the public school learning community at all levels has conceived of comprehensive teacher evaluation systems as mechanisms to improve teaching and learning, research suggests that little is known about leaders' perceptions regarding comprehensive teacher evaluation systems and the leadership actions of principals in those systems (Darling-Hammond, Wise and Pease, 1983). Further, principals voices at all levels have not been part of the dialogues to create, implement, and use sound teacher evaluation systems as a basis for action to improve teaching and learning. Hence, research that focuses upon the perceptions of elementary, middle, and high school principals regarding their actions within the performance appraisal of teachers is needed (Painter, 2001). Such research would illuminate

instructional leadership of principals' efforts to enhance teaching and learning through comprehensive teacher evaluation systems.

Context of the Problem

For the past several decades, several public education stakeholders engaged in three waves of school reform aimed at improving teaching and learning in classrooms across America. According to Desimone (2002), the first wave of reform was the educational community's response to the American educational accountability movement. Essentially, in this wave of reform, school improvement efforts focused upon simply intensifying the system that was in place. In the second wave of reform, efforts were made "on broadening and deepening the relationship between schools and families, addressing the needs of special groups of students, attracting and retaining effective teachers, upgrading teacher education, and restructuring teachers' roles to make them more professional" (Desimone, 2002; p. 433). As a result of insignificant improvement in student performance during the first two waves of school reform, the third wave of reform was implemented. In this wave, efforts at improving schools focused upon comprehensive school reform (CSR) models which focused on improving the entire school organization rather than fragments of the school (Desimone, 2002).

The third wave of reform was a response to the effective schools movement (Desimone, 2002). Essentially, the effective schools movement had several characteristics. These included: "(a) shared goals, (b) positive school climate, (c) school-level management, (d) strong district and principal leadership and support, (e) an

articulated curriculum and organizational structure, (f) maximized learning time, (g) school wide staff development, and (h) parental involvement" (Desimone, 2002; p. 434). Given this context, this study will focus on principals' instructional leadership actions regarding teacher performance evaluation in Texas effective schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify elementary, middle, and high school principals' perceptions regarding their instructional leadership actions in the performance appraisal of teachers in successful schools in Texas. The focus was on instructional leadership actions that serve to enhance efforts at improving teaching and learning through a comprehensive teacher evaluation system in Texas.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the perceptions of elementary, middle, and high school principals regarding how they use the performance appraisal of teachers as a basis for improving instruction in successful schools in Texas?
2. What are the similarities and differences in perceptions between elementary, middle, and high school principals regarding how they use the performance appraisal system for teachers as a basis for improving instruction in successful schools in Texas?

Significance of the Study

Studies regarding the performance appraisal system of teachers need to account for the actions of the school principal in successful schools. This study will contribute to the existing body of research in the field of the performance appraisal of teachers in the context of successful schools. In addition, the insights, explanations, and findings gained from this study will inform researchers regarding the means by which principals achieve an impact on school and about actions that lead to successful teacher appraisal outcomes within certain contextual forces that influence school leadership. Finally, the conclusions drawn from the study will provide greater insight regarding the staff development needs of principals in "the field" in order to successfully implement sound comprehensive teacher evaluation systems.

Methodology

A multiple case study of one elementary school, one middle school, and one high school within the same school district was conducted to identify the actions of elementary, middle, and high school principals with regard to the performance appraisal system for teachers in Texas at effective schools. Purposeful sampling was utilized to select one elementary school, one middle school, and one high school for the study based upon multiple effective schools criteria which included: (a) receiving a Texas Education Agency rating of Recognized, (b) adopting shared goals, (c) having a positive school climate, (d) using school-level management, (e) having strong district and

principal leadership and support, (f) employing an articulated curriculum and organizational structure, (g) maximizing learning time, (h) implementing school wide staff development, and (i) having strong parental involvement. Data from interviews, direct observations, and documents reviewed were coded, interpreted, thematized, and assigned units of meaning. The use of triangulation was employed to strengthen the overall findings and conclusions drawn from the data and the design of the study.

Definition of Terms

The following terms and concepts are defined for the purpose of this study:

Instructional Leadership Actions: Leadership actions that affect student learning, specifically student academic performance goal development and implementation, shaping the school culture, and management of the instructional program (Cavazos, 1999).

Teacher Performance Appraisal Systems: Teacher evaluation systems that measure teacher performance in one of three ways: (a) against a set of criteria, (b) against a set of behavioral objectives, (c) based upon student performance, or (d) a system that incorporates any combination of the three.

Comprehensive Teacher Evaluation Systems: Teacher evaluation models that are designed to measure both teacher behaviors and student academic performance usually on state or national exams.

Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS): The state required teacher performance appraisal system in Texas. This system seeks to measure both teacher behaviors and student outcomes.

Effective Schools: A body of research that identified characteristics of successful schools that grew out of the accountability movement of the 1980s which began with the publication of a national report A Nation at Risk 1983.

Exemplary Status: For a campus or district rating of Exemplary, at least 90.0 percent of “all students” (and students in each group meeting minimum size requirements must pass each section of the TAAS (TEA, 2002).

Recognized Status: For a campus or district rating of Recognized, at least 80.0 percent of “all students” and students in each group meeting minimum size requirements must pass each section of the TAAS (TEA, 2002).

Delimitations

Research studies that are qualitative in nature are not only limited in their methodological designs but are also characterized by the scope of the study. The researcher conducting the study employed the use of both direct observation and participant-observer techniques to collect the data.

As a participant-observer, the researcher collected that data for the study and also observed several events and activities that were part of the study. These events and activities included but were not limited to meetings, classroom observations, teacher-

principal conference-meetings, and informal conversations with principals and assistant principals as well as formal, semi-structured interviews with participants.

In addition, this study focused on the instructional leadership actions of principals and assistant principals at three levels—elementary, middle, and high school. It also attempted to describe those actions by which principals achieve an impact on school and student outcomes within certain contextual forces that influence school leadership.

However, this study did not attempt to evaluate the appraisal system currently in place in the state of Texas—the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS) nor will it focus on teachers’ perspectives associated with the teacher appraisal system in place.

Limitations

Research studies that are qualitative in nature are limited by the following: (a) qualitative research design, (b) researcher bias, (c) the selection of research sites, and (d) the criteria used to determine successful schools. In addition, case studies, such as this one, lack transferability as well as generalizability. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the naturalistic approach to qualitative research will increase its transferability. As a result, other researchers and consumers of this study can make judgments about the generalizability and application to another site. The goal of this research design is to provide rich descriptions about the roles and responsibilities of public school principals regarding the performance appraisal of teachers in successful school. Finally, researcher

bias may occur in documenting the description, processing the data, gathering the data, and drawing conclusions.

Assumptions

In order to frame the context for this study, there were several assumptions made by the researcher. According to Patton (1990), several assumptions underpin most qualitative studies. These include the following:

1. The assumption of the importance of understanding people and programs in context.
2. The assumption by the researcher to a commitment to study naturally occurring phenomena without introducing external controls or manipulation.
3. The assumption that understanding emerges most meaningfully from an inductive analysis of open-ended, detailed, descriptive, and quotational data gathered through direct contact with the program and its participants.

(p. 119)

Additionally, the following assumptions also framed the context for this study:

1. Instructional leadership has an impact on the performance of the school including teacher performance in some manner whether direct, mediated, or reciprocal. The body of research which supports the role of the instructional leader is consistent.

2. The principal is viewed as the school leader, yet there may be others in the system, teacher leaders, for example, who may take an active role in the leadership of the school. Leadership is shared among many persons within the school environment. Further, the principal actively engages in the supervision of teachers at all levels (elementary, middle, and high school) for the purpose of improving instruction.
3. Principals have had experience in the classroom or in some other instructional role prior to their assumption of the principalship.
4. Human characteristics affect leadership orientation. The personal and philosophical orientation of the principal affects the way he or she engages in leadership responsibilities on his/her campus.

Organization of the Study

This report consists of five chapters. Chapter I provides the introduction and overview of the problem. A review of the literature regarding the performance appraisal systems for teachers that supports the study is covered in Chapter II. Chapter III presents the methodology, procedures, and data analysis. Chapter IV includes the description of the sites. The presentation of the findings and analysis of the data gathered are presented in Chapter V. A summary, findings, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further research are presented in Chapter VI.

Summary

For the past several decades, the United States public school educational system has been involved in a nation-wide accountability movement. This movement has not left any area of the public school system in America untouched. Specifically, the accountability movement has had significant implications for both teaching and learning. The role that the principal plays in improving learning outcomes in public schools is of particular importance in this movement. Essentially, research studies such as this one seek to determine the impact that principals' instructional leadership actions have upon both teaching and learning.

The assumption that principals as instructional leaders exert a strong positive influence upon learning outcomes for students taught is well supported in the literature. In addition, the current definitions in "the field" of instructional leadership identify certain principals' actions and behaviors that constitute instructional leadership in general but little is known about specific actions regarding performance appraisal of teachers.

Although significant research and professional discourse has focused on the components of instructional leadership, there is still a need to explore additional actions of leadership which principals of successful schools exhibit and in particular, those acts which are directly related to the evaluation of teacher performance in Texas.

This chapter introduced the context of this study and the need for further exploration of selected instructional leadership perspectives. In addition, the purpose of

the study was presented along with corresponding research questions and the design, limitations, and delimitations of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE RELEVANT LITERATURE

Introduction

According to Iwanicki (1998),

three views of teacher evaluation have and continue to prevail in schools:

Past: evaluation focuses on rating teachers on the basis of style or trait criteria.

Present: evaluation focuses on analyzing teaching on the basis of accepted practices.

Future: evaluation focuses on analyzing teaching on the basis of what students and teachers learn. (p. 155)

Until recently, teacher evaluation practices conducted by most school organizations centered upon the accepted teacher evaluation practices of the past (Iwanicki, 1998; Loucks, 2000; Sowell, 1993). The majority of school personnel responsible for the evaluation of teaching focused their evaluative efforts on judging a teacher's classroom-based performance based both upon a set of trait criteria and on certain behaviors (Medley, and Coker, 1987). According to Iwanicki (1998), it wasn't until the 1980s that, "many school systems moved away from the more traditional evaluation practice of rating teachers on the basis of style or trait criteria to analyzing teaching on the basis of accepted practices" (p. 156).

Since then, the practice of evaluating teaching has undergone some major changes and is no longer focusing on evaluating teachers based upon a set of criteria or teacher behaviors only. Today, both scholars and practitioners are conceiving of teacher

evaluation systems as vehicles for the improvement of both teaching and learning (Iwanicki, 1998; Sowell, 1993; Cardno, 1995; Stronge, 1997; Ovando, 2001).

According to Ovando (2001), this shift has occurred as a result of several recent developments in the educational field. These developments include the increase in academic standards as well as the increasing need for accountability in today's public schools (Cardno, 1995).

Consequently, scholars, policy-makers, state education officials and practitioners have recognized the importance of developing and implementing teacher evaluation systems that aim to improve teaching and learning (Rieck, 1989; Arredondo, and Rucinski, 2000; Ovando, and Troxell, 1997; Perterson, Wahlquist, Bone, Thompson, and Chatterton, 2001). However, while scholars, policy-makers, state education officials, and practitioners are creating new teacher evaluation systems, a gap in the teacher evaluation literature appears to exist suggesting that teachers (the people affected by these changes) have been absent from the developments. Furthermore, also absent from these discourses and developments in the field of teacher evaluation systems have been principals (Felton, 1986).

This increasing interest in comprehensive teacher evaluation systems calls for a systematic review and analysis of the state of the field. The purpose of this chapter is to provide that examination. This chapter is divided into eight major sections: (a) introduction, (b) historical background, (c) problematic areas in teacher evaluation, (d) principals' roles and responsibilities, (e) teachers' roles in evaluation, (f) instructional leadership, (g) implications for further research, (h) and a conclusion. Section one offers

a general introduction to the chapter. Section two provides the reader with a historical background regarding the evolution of supervisory practice in general and teacher evaluation practices in particular. In section three, the researcher devotes considerable attention to several problems in the teacher evaluation research that over several decades researchers and practitioners alike have failed to reconcile. In section four, the researcher identifies several reasons noted in the literature creating the need for further research in the area of the principal's behaviors regarding teacher evaluation practices. Section five deals with an examination of several research studies illuminating several problems with the relationship between teachers and evaluation systems. Instructional leadership is presented in section six. Implications for further research are presented in section seven, and the researcher closes the review of the literature by providing the reader a conclusion in section eight.

Historical Background

Teacher evaluation processes, roles, and practices have had a long, extensive, and rich history within the American public school educational system as a supervisory practice. According to Harris (1998), "in U.S. public schools, supervisory practice was differentiated from classroom teaching by the mid-nineteenth century as both rural county and urban city school systems emerged" (p. 1). Thus, about the 1850s is the period of time when the first public school educational supervisors assumed the role and were recognized as the first school personnel responsible for several non-teaching duties (Hardy, 1997). One of their first major areas of responsibility included the evaluation of

school personnel primarily the classroom teacher. During this era or period, "as the oldest of the non-teaching positions in school operations, early supervision of schools was further differentiated from governance, finance, and general administrative practice by emphasis on inspection of student progress and enforcement of curricular prescriptions" (as cited in Harris, 1998; p. 1). Further, the evolution of teacher evaluation may be traced through the following three generations of evaluation.

First Generation Evaluation

Under the first forms of school supervision, which focused on monitoring student progress and curriculum, the principal was assigned the responsibility to evaluate teachers (Hardy, 1997; Harris, 1998). According to Harris (1998), in this early period, "the emphasis on the individual teacher as the object of supervision as distinguished from emphasis on the student was an early reform that has only recently been challenged" (p. 1).

Consequently, early evaluation practices focused mostly on the teacher. It was common practice, during those days, to evaluate teachers using a set of criteria or traits (Hardy, 1997; Sowell, 1993; McDougal, 2001; Medley, and Coker, 1987). The evaluator would enter a classroom observe both the teacher and the teaching environment and using a checklist would rate the teacher based upon their meeting of the criteria. According to Iwanicki (1998), "it was not uncommon to find this approach being applied through the mid-1970s" (p. 155).

The first generations of teacher evaluation systems evolved over many decades, and their evolution was extremely slow and gradual. For example, the practice of evaluating teachers based upon a set of trait criteria was considered to be outdated by the 1940s. One scholar labeled this practice *Yesterday's Supervisory Formula* in 1941 (Iwanicki, 1998; p. 155). Despite its outdatedness, this practice continued in existence well into the 1970s, and it is not uncommon to find school systems today that are still conducting the teacher evaluation process using trait criteria.

According to the literature, a main reason for the long existence of using a trait criteria model is due to the complex nature of teaching. As the early school systems evolved, the first generation of school administrators worked under an apprenticeship training model (Harris, 1998), and one of the responsibilities that was handed down from one administrator to the next was the teacher evaluation process. Consequently, the early teacher evaluation forms were considered a tradition. As a result, the teacher evaluation process did not receive much attention, and it was not seen as an important process that could be valuable to improve the school organization (Cardine, 1998; McDougall, 2001).

Second Generation Evaluation

It was not until the decade of the 1980s that a shift began to occur in the way that school systems and school administrators began to think about and conduct teacher evaluations. According to Iwanicki (1998), "during the 1980s, many school systems moved away from the more traditional evaluation practice of rating teachers on the basis of style or trait criteria to analyzing teaching on the basis of accepted practices" (p. 156). One of the major driving forces behind this shift involved a movement by states that focused on beginning teacher evaluation (Trube, 1997). During this period, it was believed that by focusing on evaluating teaching practices, indirectly, student performance could also be improved (Iwanicki, 1998; McDougal, 2001; Searfoss, and Eny, 1996). Evaluators believed that by providing feedback to teachers regarding their teaching practices, they could also improve student performance (McDougal, 2001; Searfoss, and Eny, 1996). According to the literature, the practice of improving teaching in order to improve learning was based upon the common belief that this process worked (McDougal, 2001; Searfoss, and Eny, 1996). During most of this period, no data existed to prove that student performance increased as a direct result of improving teaching practices (Iwanicki, 1998). Iwanicki (1998), concludes that, "if the goal of teacher evaluation is to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools, then we have been only partially successful" (p. 156).

Third Generation Evaluation

Today's teacher evaluation systems have begun to bridge the third teacher evaluation system generational gap. Several driving forces in public school educational systems have led to the need to re-focus the teacher evaluation process on the performance of students (Searfoss, and Eny, 1996). According to Ovando (2001); Tetenbaum, and Mulkeen (1988); Henson, and Hall (1993) these driving forces include accountability demands, academic success of students, linking performance evaluation and career ladder programs, the need to connect staff development and teacher evaluation to improve teaching, and to develop teacher evaluation systems that consider non-teaching, administrative and support duties that are increasingly becoming a part of a teacher's work. Stronge (1997) states, "the two most frequently cited purposes of personnel evaluation are accountability and performance improvement" (p. 3).

In addition to the above-cited purposes for teacher evaluation systems, many additional reasons exist for the creation and implementation of current teacher evaluation systems. For example, the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession (1986) report essentially cites three major reasons for the need to link teacher performance with student achievement. According to that report, teachers and principals should be held accountable for student learning, school leaders should create productive and effective schools, and incentives should be linked to student performance (as cited in Ovando, 2001; p. 215).

Other features of new evaluation systems focused on student learning include several key distinctions. For example, a 1999 publication of the Association for

Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) cites several purposes for the need to create and implement new and renewed teacher evaluation systems. These purposes include, "professional development of teachers, context centered, reciprocal learning between supervisor and teacher, and a culture of professionalism" (ASCD, 1999; p. 216). It is believed that these key features foster a highly effective teacher evaluation system that promotes teaching and learning.

However, the history of the evolution and implementation of teacher evaluation systems over the generations has not developed without several dilemmas that both researchers and practitioners have been unable to reconcile. Several problematic areas emerged in the literature regarding the development, implementation, and integration of sound teacher evaluation systems.

Problematic Areas in Teacher Evaluation

Formative Versus Summative Evaluation

While the previously cited reasons, distinctions, driving forces, and key features of new teacher evaluation are identified as positive features of current systems, a number of problematic areas in the new calls for evaluation exist. For instance, the calls for the creation and implementation of new teacher evaluation systems that consist of continuous on-going meaningful dialogue between evaluator (supervisor) and evaluated (teacher), that integrate staff development and training of teachers with evaluation, and that encourage risk-taking and innovation in teaching on behalf of the teacher, create

problematic areas for effective implementation. For example, Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (1998) state that "unless the procedures for direct assistance (supervision and professional growth) are made clearly distinct and separate from evaluation (formal contract and renewal and judgment of competence), one can talk until one is blue in the face about supervision as helping and formative process, but teachers will not believe in it" (p. 216). Essentially, the fact that the evaluator is performing dual functions--formative evaluation and summative evaluation--creates a significant conflict to the development of effective teaching through collaboration, staff development, and training. Teachers will be reluctant to open up and share their concerns with the same person who will evaluate them and in the end make summative judgments about their performance.

Selection of Student Performance Measures

As efforts to link teacher evaluation to student academic performance are undertaken, other problems also emerge with the teacher evaluation systems. One of the most problematic areas in implementing a teacher evaluation system that aims to improve teaching and learning is the selection of the indicators which will be used to measure student learning (Ovando, 2001). Currently, a number of student measures, mainly standardized test scores, exist as well as technologies that can be utilized to measure student achievement. However, Ovando (2001), states that the "types of

student outcomes to use and how to measure student achievement in a meaningful way" remain the greatest challenges (p. 217).

Organizational Challenges

Finally, other scholars such as Frase and Streshly (1994) argue that school districts that are interested in implementing comprehensive teacher evaluation systems may face additional organizational challenges. According to Ovando (2001), "those challenges may reflect lack of accuracy, lack of feedback, inflation of teacher ratings, lack of true alignment between professional growth and personnel evaluation results and failure to assume teacher evaluation responsibility" (p. 217). Therefore, it is important for school district officials to exercise caution when they implement comprehensive teacher evaluation systems.

Principals' Roles and Responsibilities

The chief key agent, cited in the literature, responsible for the evaluation of teachers is the school principal. According to Harris (1986), "despite extensive growth and increasing school district complexity in recent decades, there is little centralization or coordination of teacher evaluation in most local schools" (p. 235). Early researchers noted that as a result, "policy and instrumentation are simplistic, and principals are generally designated as the only implementers" (Harris, 1986; p. 235). Due to the lack of the existence of centralized systems for conducting teacher evaluation processes for a

variety of reasons and the general designation of the school principal as the chief evaluator by default, it is of particular importance for researchers to focus their efforts upon the role of the principal in evaluating teachers. Of particular importance is the attention principals have received for their impact upon teaching and learning. It is also important for researchers to focus on the role of the principal in evaluating teachers because of the highly complex and increasingly changing role of the principal in today's schools.

For the past several years, researchers have become increasingly interested in the amount of influence or effects that principals have upon the achievement levels of the students that they serve in the schools where they lead. Despite this interest, little is known regarding the effect that principals exert upon the academic achievement of the students they serve and the overall quality of the instructional programs in the schools they lead. For example, according to Youngs and King (2002), “despite an abundance of research on principal leadership, few studies have conceptualized or empirically examined connections among principal leadership, professional development, and school organizational conditions that may influence instructional quality” (p. 644). Consequently, it is important for future studies to focus on both empirically sound as well as qualitatively sound research in order to bring to light the connections or lack thereof between principal leadership, professional development, and school organizational conditions that may influence the quality of the instructional program. This is important because studies of this type may also show the relationship between

principal leadership and its effects upon teacher performance appraisal systems for improving the instructional program of the school.

Despite the need for future research of both teacher evaluation systems and instructional leadership of the principals, few studies have demonstrated positive relationships between principal leadership and student performance. According to Youngs & King (2002) studies conducted within the last ten years show that principal leadership does influence student achievement through the conditions of school organization they create as well as the instructional quality of their schools. These scholars also suggest that,

instructional quality can also be strengthened when principals create internal structures and conditions that promote teacher learning. Such actions include establishing regular meeting times for teams of teachers to plan instruction and reflect on their practice, aligning school-wide professional development activities with school goals, promoting social trust among staff members, and practicing distributed leadership (Youngs & King, 2002; p. 644).

These findings are significant because the current calls for new comprehensive teacher evaluation systems are for designing performance appraisal systems that aim to improve both student performance (academic achievement) and teaching. In addition, comprehensive teacher evaluation systems utilize teacher learning structures such as professional development activities as effective methods of sound evaluation systems.

According to researchers, the chief agents in school organizations who are responsible for creating and implementing comprehensive teacher evaluation systems are school principals. For example, Shinkfield (1994), asserts that while principals assume many roles, one of their most important responsibilities is the evaluation of

teacher performance. This responsibility is important for several reasons. These reasons include: (a) the improvement of the instructional program, (b) the improvement of teaching practices, (c) the improvement of student performance, and (d) the improvement of staff development activities and opportunities for teachers. In addition, Shinkfield (1994), states that, “whether trained or not in the various areas of instructional responsibility, the school principal must examine the performance of staff members in order to provide constructive feedback and to make decisions that affect individual teachers and the school itself” (p. 252).

Along with their many roles and responsibilities, principals make numerous decisions daily that impact the instructional program of the school directly and other decisions regarding the evaluation of teachers which affect the instructional program, indirectly. One of the ways in which principals make decisions that affect the instructional program indirectly is through their actions regarding staff development and training opportunities for teachers. According to Youngs & King (2002), principals’ beliefs and actions regarding staff development and training opportunities for teachers is one of the most important ways in which principals can utilize the new calls for comprehensive teacher evaluation systems in order to improve teaching and learning (p. 644). Additionally, Shinkfield (1994), states that, “while some delegation of administrative responsibilities is appropriate, the ultimate responsibility for the professional development of staff, including evaluation and curriculum matters, must reside with the principal” (p. 252).

In addition to their responsibility for providing staff development opportunities for teachers as part of the new comprehensive performance appraisal systems, principals should seek to improve teaching and learning through the unique features of new teacher evaluation systems. For example, scholars assert that, “school leaders can connect their schools to sources of professional development that concentrate on instruction and student outcomes, that provide opportunities for feedback and assistance in teachers’ classrooms, and that are sustained and continuous” (Youngs & King, 2002; p. 644). Moreover, these same researchers argue that other studies show that principals can also improve teaching by providing teachers with opportunities in which they can meet and plan their instruction as well as collaborate with each other in order to bring about positive educational change (Youngs & King, 2002; p. 647). Other scholars argue that this is an important as well as effective measure for improving the overall quality of the instructional program at a school. This is also an important key feature of the new teacher evaluation systems. According to Binkley (1995), in order for principals to have a positive effect upon the performance of the students they serve, principals must encourage teachers to reflect critically upon their teaching practices and provide them with opportunities to practice reflective inquiry. Finally, “a goal of principals should be to help teachers become self-critical, self-monitoring, self-evaluative, and self-confident” (Binkley, 1995; p. 224).

The goals of providing staff development and training opportunities for teachers, providing teachers with opportunities so that they may engage in reflective practice, providing opportunities for teachers to collaborate and plan together for improving the

delivery of instruction, and encouraging teachers to become self-critical, self-monitoring, self-evaluative, and self-confident are all important for several reasons. In addition, new systems are also being designed to allow teachers more flexibility in their performance appraisal by allowing them, in some cases, to engage in self-evaluation. Essentially, by establishing and implementing the above-mentioned comprehensive teacher evaluation processes, principals would be effectively implementing the features of the new comprehensive teacher evaluation systems. In addition, principals would also improve both teaching and learning by the execution of these key features for the new comprehensive evaluation systems.

Although throughout this section, several examples have been offered to demonstrate the significant and positive roles that principals play in the effective implementation and utility of the new comprehensive teacher evaluation systems, numerous problematic areas exist regarding the principal's role in the successful implementation of evaluation systems. For example, in a study conducted in California and subsequently replicated in the state of Arizona, Painter (2000) found that the top two barriers perceived by principals as the most significant to effective implementation of teacher evaluation are teacher unions and the amount of time needed to complete the process. These same principals blamed union representatives more than the actual negotiated teacher contracts for their failure to effectively carry out the teacher evaluation process (Painter, 2000).

In addition to teacher unions and the lack of time to effectively implement teacher evaluation systems, researchers also cite the desire by school principals to avoid

conflict as a significant barrier towards implementation. According to Bridges (1992), the desire by principals to avoid interpersonal conflict is caused by both personal and situational factors (as cited in Painter, 2000; p. 253). Further, she states that the most significant factor that leads to ineffective implementation is the personal factor to avoid conflict and unpleasantness. She states that conflict is unavoidable due to the fact that it is a by-product of criticism that accompanies the performance appraisal of teachers (Painter, 2000). Consequently, principals can indirectly cause the ineffective implementation of teacher evaluation systems due to their desire to avoid criticizing teachers through their appraisals of teachers' performance.

Other problems with effective implementation are cited in the literature. According to Painter (2000), these problems mainly relate to structural aspects of effective implementation. Tucker (1997), found that other barriers included lack of time and support for the building administrator, personality characteristics of the evaluator, and lack of financial support for all phases of the process.

Finally, also cited in the literature as a significant barrier towards effective implementation of teacher evaluation systems is the lack of principal preparation through staff development and training to effectively evaluate teachers through comprehensive teacher evaluation systems. Two studies cite the lack of administrator training and weak university preparation programs as two significant barriers towards effective implementation. A group of Rand researchers noted that the knowledge and skill of the evaluators is crucial to good evaluation. Yet Poston and Manatt (1993) found administrator competency in evaluation to be "moderate at best" (Painter, 2000; p.

254). Furthermore, Hunter (1988) affirms that “principals still have not had the opportunity to learn how to either supervise (help) or evaluate a teacher: an indictment of our universities, many of whom still do an inadequate job of preparing principals for either professional responsibility.” (p. 275).

The above-mentioned barriers and others may have a detrimental effect on the effective implementation of teacher evaluation systems. Therefore, further research is needed regarding the perceptions of principals at all three levels of school administration in successful schools. The lack of principal preparation, the human desire to avoid conflict, and the existence of structural variables such as time and financial support all point to the need for future studies into the actions of the building principal in teacher evaluation systems. Further research may illuminate effective actions by principals in successful schools that can help guide the development and effective implementation of sound teacher evaluation systems. In addition, research of this kind can also shed some light that can help guide the efforts of researchers, policy-makers, and state education officials as they conceive of new and effective teacher evaluation systems.

While future research is needed in this area, current research into comprehensive teacher evaluation systems reveals that the most recent educational reform trends have had a significant impact upon current practices in the roles that teachers play in teacher evaluation systems.

Teachers' Roles in Evaluation

Similar to the effects that the educational reform waves have had upon building principals at all three levels, the same waves have had significant implications for teachers at all levels. For example, according to Poston & Manatt (1993), “efforts to re-conceptualize teacher performance evaluation have been the focus of school reform since 1979, when the Phi Delta Kappa Gallup Poll discovered that “improving teacher quality” was the respondent’s first choice for improving public schools” (p. 41). Despite the importance of that poll, individuals, such as teachers, in the change process have only been given minimal attention. According to Tucker (1997), “only minimal attention has been given to the subset of teachers whose performance is marginal or incompetent, those who undermine the very concept of ‘educational excellence’ (p. 103). As a result, further studies are needed in order to better understand the individual actions that both individual teachers and principals perform in teacher evaluation systems in school reform. Furthermore, this section will explore several key characteristics of comprehensive teacher evaluation systems as they relate to teachers in performance evaluation systems.

It is important for studies of this kind and future studies to focus upon the roles of teachers in evaluation systems because they are the key school personnel who interact and teach students on a daily basis. It is fair, therefore, to conclude that teachers’ actions or teacher behaviors directly and indirectly impact both what students learn as well as students’ abilities to develop life-long learning skills. This claim is well documented in several studies which demonstrate that a correlation exists between teachers’ behaviors

in the classroom and student learning. In addition, the positive correlation between teacher behaviors and student learning rests upon the assumption that teachers as professionals exercise effective teaching practices which have a direct positive impact upon student achievement levels. However, most educational reform efforts focus upon indirect efforts to improve teaching and learning. These efforts include: “(a) capacity building, (b) professional development, (c) goal setting, and (d) collaboration” (Tucker, 1997; p. 104).

While evidence suggests that providing indirect teacher structures to improve both teaching and learning, researchers also point to the fact that there are teachers who for several reasons do not practice effective teaching practices and who do not benefit from indirect structures to improve their practice. It is believed that barriers to effective teaching practices include: (a) a lack of motivation, (b) burn-out, and (c) personal crises. According to estimates by the U.S. Department of Education, incompetent teachers number between 5 to 15 percent. Consequently, if the goals of accountability and school reform aim to improve teaching and learning and if actions by school administrators to provide indirect pedagogical structures to improve teaching fail to positively impact all teachers, it is imperative for school system administrators to develop and implement sound teacher evaluation systems (Tucker, 1997). Further, Tucker (1997) concluded that,

one means of addressing teacher incompetence so that students and the general public are best served is through the use of better constructed evaluation systems and organizational support structures that balance the naturally occurring deterrents to an assertive stance toward teacher incompetence (p. 104).

In addition to the barrier of teacher incompetence towards building sound teacher evaluation systems, other findings in the performance appraisal literature suggest factors that should be considered when addressing studies of the actions of principals and teachers in performance appraisal systems. For example, the area of teacher evaluation has not only become an essential mechanism for instructionally effective schools, it has also become an important organizational structure to address teacher compensation areas such as Merit Pay, Careers Ladders, and Educational Specialty Boards. It is believed that in order to positively impact student performance, teachers should be compensated appropriately as a means to motivate them to perform at high levels. As a result, Hiller (2001), states “Educational Specialty Boards, as advocated by Lieberman (1985), and Career Ladders, such as the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Career Ladder Plan (Schlechtz, 1985), must all depend on evaluations that are fair, explicit, participatory, and growth oriented” (p. 144). It is through evaluation systems that are built around these key features that offer the most promising results to address instructionally sound schools and teacher compensation systems.

Because researchers have recognized the varied benefits of teacher evaluation systems, other studies have surveyed large teacher samples across diverse school settings in an attempt to identify other key factors of sound teacher evaluation systems which teachers perceive to be important components of sound performance appraisal systems. One study of this kind includes Stark and Lowther’s (1984) study of teachers’ perceptions of evaluation systems that influence teachers’ support or opposition to methods of teacher evaluation. The findings from this study included several factors

that have significant implications for theory (researchers) and practice (principals). First of all, this study reported the findings of teachers whose teaching experience ranged from three to 30 years and who represented a wide variety of school districts. Secondly, respondents perceived their work as a combination of the following: (a) a labor, (b) a profession, (c) a craft, and (d) an art. Additionally, these same teachers (89%), reported feeling that the most appropriate method of evaluating teaching was self-assessment. Also, about 85% of teachers felt that some form of administrator appraisal was appropriate and 77% also felt that administrator judgments regarding professional growth were appropriate. In contrast, 52% to 79% of respondents viewed using both parents and/or student evaluation components of their performance as inappropriate. Other researchers state that essentially teachers view internal mechanisms as appropriate considerations for sound comprehensive teacher evaluation systems (Hiller, 2001). Finally, Hiller (2001) notes, “the findings of this study imply the need for multidimensional evaluation procedures in which administrator judgments, peer review, self-appraisal, and negotiated objectives are all utilized to encourage effective teaching” (pp. 144-145). It is important to pay close attention to these findings as states adopt teacher evaluation policies that allow flexibility to school districts in developing and implementing sound evaluation systems. Further, the findings are also important for principals because as we have already seen, they are the key agents responsible for the performance appraisal of teachers.

Lastly, other studies highlight the findings of other teacher perceptions regarding their views of sound evaluation systems that also have serious implications for

additional research studies regarding the role and responsibilities of school principals in comprehensive teacher evaluation systems. For example, in a recent study conducted by Ovando (2001), the author identifies other current trends in comprehensive teacher evaluation systems that have significant implications for practicing principals. In this study, Ovando (2001) recognizes the current pressures that the accountability movement has placed upon learner-centered teacher evaluation trends. In addition, she delineates several of these pressures as the following:

- Today's teacher evaluation systems are essentially designed for improving teaching and learning.
- Teachers' areas of responsibility are moving more into areas outside of the classroom such as leadership duties, and consequently, school leaders such as principals are searching for more comprehensive evaluation systems that can capture these outside areas of responsibility.
- Other current trends in teacher evaluation systems include connecting evaluation to staff development and training as well as towards more self-evaluation.
- One controversial trend in evaluation is essentially the use of student performance data, mainly on standardized test scores, as measures for evaluating teaching performance.

In this same study, Ovando (2001) reported the findings of her study regarding teachers' perceptions of a learner-centered teacher evaluation system. The teachers in this study included twelve elementary school teachers who provided the following brief summary of their beliefs relative to this system. First, teachers identified staff

development opportunities, time, and additional resources as the top three forms of support that they receive as a result of the comprehensive evaluation system. In addition, teachers also identified several other benefits associated with this system. These benefits included: (a) opportunities for administrators to conduct walk-through observations, (b) opportunities for professional growth of teachers, (c) feedback by supervisors regarding teaching performance, and (d) opportunities to dialogue between teachers and supervisors regarding teaching practices. Finally, teachers concluded by stating that a learner-centered teacher evaluation system creates and fosters a comprehensive performance appraisal perspective, and it also allows the teachers opportunities for self-evaluation, a feature of current evaluation systems stated earlier in this paper.

In contrast to the benefits identified by teachers regarding a comprehensive teacher evaluation system, teachers also listed several negative features of such a system. These features included two: (a) the inability of the system to capture the true teaching abilities of teachers and (b) the subjectivity of the system which ranks teachers by subjective categories of teaching performance.

Instructional Leadership

According to the literature, instructional leadership is conceptualized in two categories. These categories are a broad general view of instructional leadership and a more narrow definition of instructional leadership (Murphy, 1988; Sheppard, 1993; Sheppard, 1996). The narrow definition of instructional leadership includes actions and behaviors that are directly related to teaching and learning. One of those such actions includes clinical instructional supervision.

In contrast to the narrow definition of instructional leadership, the broad definition includes all of those actions that instructional leaders perform. For example, those behaviors include all actions that affect student learning including routine managerial tasks such as managing school facilities, discipline, and custodians. It is considered that these routine managerial tasks impact the teaching and learning process as much as direct instructional leadership behaviors. In this study, the broad conceptualization of instructional leadership theory will be used.

In the broad definition of instructional leadership, there is agreement about the specific leadership actions of principals. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) have conceptualized three categories in the broad definition. These categories include: (a) defining the school mission, (b) managing the instructional program, and (c) promoting school climate. Within these three broad categories the following more specific categories exist. These include: (a) framing school goals, (b) communicating school goals, (c) supervising and evaluating instruction, (d) coordinating curriculum, (e) monitoring student progress, (f) protecting instructional time, (g) promoting professional

development, (h) maintaining high visibility, (i) providing incentives for teachers, (j) enforcing academic standards, and (k) providing incentives for students.

In the area of instructional management, the principal primarily focuses upon the supervision and evaluation of instruction. By evaluating instruction, the principal is primarily responsible for coordinating the curriculum and monitoring student performance. In order to accomplish this end, principals coordinate classroom objectives, provide instructional support, and monitor instruction through informal classroom visits for both supervisory and evaluative purposes.

Implications for Further Research

The nature of supervisory practice has evolved for the last 150 years of public schooling in America as well as the practice of supervising and evaluating teaching. Major societal changes as well as the increasing complexity of American society have had substantial implications for supervisory practices, teaching practices, and thus teacher performance evaluation practices. Teacher evaluation practices moved from the inspectorial criteria-based evaluation models to teaching behaviors-based evaluations and finally to outcome-based performance evaluation.

As society continues to evolve, increasing accountability pressures continue to have significant implications for supervisory practices in general and comprehensive teacher evaluation systems in particular. Consequently, researchers and policy-makers have responded with efforts to improve teacher evaluation. However, the voices of both teachers as well as principals have been absent from these efforts. As a result, future

research is needed in order to highlight principals' perspectives regarding their instructional leadership actions within performance appraisal of teachers as an effort to contribute both to theory and practice.

Several authors in the field recognize the need for future research related to the instructional leadership actions of principals in teacher evaluation. First, future research is needed in order to address the growing problem of inadequate teachers. According to Painter (2000), "although scholars and popular press writers are critical of school district failures to remove inadequately performing teachers, little has been said about the thinking of principals on this issue" (p. 253). Another reason identified in the literature indicating the need for future research is the increasing complexity of the principalship and the consequential lack of time to effectively evaluate teachers. For example, "principals identify the amount of time required to engage in the process as a barrier. Continued study of principal beliefs about these factors may suggest (1) areas of needed reform in the implementation of evaluation and (2) administrative training needs" (Painter, 2000; p. 253). Still further, others argue that future research into the role of the principal in teacher evaluation is needed in order to identify principals' effects in evaluation. According to Youngs & King (2002), "study findings indicate that in future studies of principal effects, it may be useful for researchers to employ professional community and program coherence as mediating variables between principal leadership and student achievement" (p. 643). And finally, scholars also assert that future studies which focus on the role of the principal are needed in order to both understand the function of the school leader in teacher evaluation because they are the key supervisory

personnel responsible for implementing teacher evaluation systems. According to Painter (2000), “because principals are the front-line implementers of evaluation policy, their beliefs about barriers (real or perceived) are likely to influence their actions” (p. 253).

Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher undertook a review of the literature regarding the behaviors of public school principals in performance appraisal systems for teachers. The researcher began the treatment of the literature by developing and providing the reader with a historical background regarding the evolution of supervisory practice in general and teacher evaluation practices in particular. This section traced the evolution of teacher evaluation systems through three generations of the teacher evaluation literature. The first generation focused on evaluating teachers through the use of trait criteria. Generation two was characterized by the evaluation of teachers by focusing on accepted teaching practices. Finally, today’s teacher evaluation systems focus on the improvement of both teaching and learning.

The researcher also devoted considerable attention to several problems in the teacher evaluation research that over several decades researchers and practitioners alike have failed to reconcile. The dysfunctional marriage between formative and summative evaluation, the appropriate selection of student measures as indicators of a teacher’s performance, and several organizational challenges have all proven to be formidable

problems that have prevented many teacher evaluation systems from becoming successful.

In the area of the principal's behaviors regarding teacher evaluation practices, the researcher identified several reasons noted in the literature creating the need for further research. Principals as the frontline implementers of evaluation systems, the role that principal leadership plays in learning outcomes for students, and the limited research in this area of study all point to the need for further investigation.

Finally, the researcher concludes with an examination of several studies illuminating several problems with the relationship between teachers and evaluation systems. Several of these include the lack of teachers' voices in the field of evaluation, the inability of comprehensive teacher evaluation systems to capture teachers' lack of motivation, teacher burnout, and personal crises. Implications for further research were presented in the concluding pages of this chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

Design and Methodology

The design and methodology chapter consists of six sections: (a) a general introduction to the chapter is presented in section one, (b) the research design is presented in section two, (c) the criteria for site and participant selection which includes a description of the research sample for both the participants and the school organizations is presented in section three, (d) the procedures for both data collection and instrumentation are described in section four, (e) data analysis procedures are explained in section five, and (f) finally a summary of the chapter is presented in section six.

Introduction

Currently in the “field” of educational research, two comprehensive research paradigms are utilized to conduct research studies. In no particular order of significance, the first one considered a more traditional because it utilizes the scientific method in which hypothesis are formulated and tested. This paradigm is called a quantitative research design model. The second one has received increased attention over the last several decades for its significantly powerful design to yield non-traditional results or realities. This paradigm is called a qualitative research design model. Within both the quantitative and qualitative paradigms a great number of unique research designs exist.

This study will be guided by a qualitative research design. Primarily, the researcher has elected to utilize the qualitative research paradigm because of its

powerful ability to deal with and explain the unique phenomenon under study.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985),

the naturalist (the researcher) elects qualitative methods over quantitative (although not exclusively) because they are more adaptable to dealing with multiple (and less aggregatable) realities; because such methods expose more directly the nature of the transaction between investigator and respondent (or object) and hence make easier an assessment of the extent to which the phenomenon is described in terms of (is biased by) the investigator's own posture; and because qualitative methods are more sensitive to and adaptable to the many mutually shaping influences and value patterns that may be encountered. (p. 40)

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify elementary, middle, and high school principals' perceptions regarding their instructional leadership actions in the performance appraisal for teachers in successful schools in Texas. The focus was on instructional leadership actions that serve to enhance efforts at improving teaching and learning through a comprehensive teacher evaluation system in Texas. Three questions guided this study. These were:

1. What are the perceptions of elementary, middle, and high school principals regarding how they use the performance appraisal of teachers as a basis for improving instruction in successful schools in Texas?
2. What are the similarities and differences in perceptions between elementary, middle, and high school principals regarding how they use the performance appraisal system for teachers as a basis for improving instruction in successful schools in Texas?

Design of the Study

The researcher used a multiple case study design and included a cross-site analysis to investigate the elementary, middle, and high school principals' perceptions regarding their actions and behaviors in the performance appraisal system for teachers in successful schools in Texas. Researchers affirm that future studies need to provide a description of the actions of principals in the performance appraisal for teachers. Therefore, a case study design was considered to be appropriate. Research using qualitative case studies can be a powerful method to determine individualized outcomes such as a principal's behaviors and actions (Patton, 1990). Further, Patton (1990) writes, "case studies become particularly useful where one needs to understand some special people, particular problem, or unique situation in great depth, and where one can identify cases rich in information—rich in the sense that a great deal can be learned from a few exemplars of the phenomenon in question" (p. 54). Cases can include: (a) persons, (b) events, (c) programs, (d) organizations, (e) time periods, (f) critical incidents, or (g) communities (Patton, 1990). For the purposes of this study, the case study unit of analysis will be principals in selected successful schools in Texas.

This study incorporated five characteristics of qualitative research outlined by Bogdan and Biklen (1992):

1. Qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument (p. 27).
2. Qualitative research is descriptive (p. 28).

3. Qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products (p. 28).
4. Qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively (p. 29).
5. “Meaning” is of essential concern to the qualitative approach (p. 29).

Additionally, Yin (2003) cites one major purpose followed by several advantages and logic for using a multiple case study design within the overall scope of inquiry. According to Yin (2003) the most compelling reason for using a multiple case study design is for replication, not sampling logic. Further, he states, “the logic underlying the use of multiple-case studies is the same. Each case must be carefully selected so that it either (a) predicts similar results (a literal replication) or (b) predicts contrasting results but for predictable reasons (a theoretical replication)” (Yin, 2003; p. 47). Finally, Herriott and Firestone (1983) advance that the evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust.

Site and Participant Selection

Site Selection

Selection of participants is critical in qualitative research; therefore, the researcher used purposeful sampling to identify the three Texas public school campus levels (elementary, middle, and high school) as well as the particular sites for the study. According to Patton (1990), “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in

selecting *information-rich cases* for study in depth. Information rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposeful sampling” (p. 169). Additionally, Patton (1990) also asserts, “the purpose of purposeful sampling is to select information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study” (p. 169).

In addition to the unit of analysis or sampling technique used for this study, several different strategies exist. For this study, the researcher selected the criterion sampling strategy. According to Patton (1990), “the logic of criterion sampling is to review and study all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance. This approach is common in quality assurance efforts” (p. 176).

The elementary, middle, and high schools selected for the research project received either an Exemplary rating or a Recognized rating according to the public school accountability standards set by the Texas Education Agency. The criteria for a campus rating of Exemplary is the following: at least 90.0 percent of “all students” and students in each group meeting minimum size requirements must pass each section of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) Test. The criteria for a campus rating of Recognized is the following: at least 80.0 percent of “all students” and students in each group meeting minimum size requirements must pass each section of the TAAS. Student groups are defined by TEA as African American, Hispanic, White, and Economically Disadvantaged. In addition to these base indicators the attendance at these campuses must also be at 94 percent or higher, and the dropout rate must be 3.5 percent or lower for all students and each student group (African American, Hispanic,

White, and Economically Disadvantaged). Two final requirements were that the elementary, middle, and high schools selected for the study have a record of high levels of student performance. Thus, the three schools that met all of the criteria were selected to participate in the study. The second final requirement was that the principal of each school had tenure of at least three years as principal of the school.

Additionally, several school districts across the state met the study's criteria for selection. As a result, the researcher used convenience sampling to select the school district for the study. To this end, the researcher selected the school district due to its (a) geographical location making traveling to and from the district convenient, (b) accessibility to both campus and district personnel since the researcher was a former employee of the school district for eight years, and (c) the researcher's interest in conducting a study in a school district with a perceived lack of attention by the school research community.

One of the school district's central instructional department administrators recommended to the researcher three school sites which not only met the study's criteria but also had a reputation for student success over a period of time and served as the district's feeder pattern for the district's Gifted and Talented (GT) Program.

Participant Selection

Several participants were selected for interviews. Those selected to participate in the study from the elementary, middle, and high schools included: (a) the principal, and (b) members of the principal's leadership team that included only assistant principals. This cross-section of participants provided a thorough representation of the elementary, middle, and high schools based upon decision-making groups and participatory levels of participants in the comprehensive teacher evaluation system.

The principal submitted the names of the assistant principals to the researcher. The criteria for assistant principal selection included those assistant principals who have: (a) taught at least three years in public schools, (b) participated in the planning process for improvement efforts in the school, (c) knowledge of campus improvement efforts and goal realization, and (d) participated in developing the campus performance objectives. Both the principal and the researcher participated in the selection of the assistant principals.

Instrumentation

In any qualitative study, the individual researcher is the most significant instrument. According to Patton (1990), "the quality of the information obtained during an interview is largely dependent on the interviewer" (p. 279). Given the importance of the researcher as the primary instrument, the researcher must undergo rigorous formal training in order to become a skilled researcher and ensure validity. Patton (1990) asserts, "training includes learning how to write descriptively; practicing the disciplined recording of field notes; knowing how to separate detail from trivia in order to achieve

the former without being overwhelmed by the latter; and using rigorous methods to validate observations” (p. 201). Using Yin’s (1984) guide for the preparation of the researcher, the investigator underwent formal training and preparation, obtained permission to utilize and refine a pre-existing case study protocol, and conducted a pilot study. Additionally, this researcher prepared field packets and rehearsed interview procedures.

Protocol Development

In a qualitative study utilizing multiple case study analysis, the protocol accounts for a high-level of reliability and is essential in case study research (Yin, 1984). According to Yin (1984), the protocol should have the following sections: (a) overview of the case study project, (b) field procedures, (c) case study questions, and (d) guide for the case study report. For use in this research study, the overview of the case study included: (a) background information, (b) substantive issues being studied, (c) relevant readings on the subject, and (d) the names of participants involved in this research study. The field procedures contained approval letters from district and campus-level personnel to conduct the study, master school schedules for each of the schools, listings of course offerings, personal calendar, and pertinent telephone numbers. For the purpose of this research project, the case study questions originated from one general area—what actions principals exhibit in regard to the performance appraisal of teachers in Texas.

As significant categories arose, the researcher adapted and developed additional questions.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted at a high school with demographic and student performance levels similar to the schools in the research project. The pilot study facilitated the refinement of data collection plans with respect to both the procedures of the study and the content of the data (Yin, 1984). The participants in the pilot study included one high school principal and one assistant principal. Essentially, the pilot study helped guide the researcher towards the refinement of data collection procedures, the establishment of relationships with the participants, and the understanding of the context of the study so that better questions could be developed for the actual research project (Yin, 1984).

Field Packet

The researcher prepared individual field packets for each of the school sites that were visited. The packet included a desktop tape recorder for recording all interviews, cassette tapes, extra batteries, loose leaf paper, manila folders, pens, paper clips, markers, and index cards. Additionally, several copies of the interview questions were included in the field packet. Space between questions in the interview protocol was provided to facilitate note taking between questions. The material for each of the

research school sites was color coded to aid in the identification of the material for each particular school. Finally, a paid professional transcriber was contracted to transcribe each of the interviews after each day of visitation.

Interview Preparation

In qualitative research, the preparation of the researcher as the human instrument is imperative to the qualitative research process. This researcher prepared for the study by personally contacting the elementary, middle, and high school principals and assistant principals, reviewing background information about the schools, and rehearsing interviewing skills. With the principals, the researcher conducted telephone interviews to become aware of background information, to generate additional ideas, and to establish a higher level of rapport from the initial meeting with the principals. As a result of these initial interviews with the principals, the principals were asked to send the following information to the researcher: (a) campus bell schedule; (b) campus master schedule to determine courses taught by teachers; (c) teacher roster with teaching assignments and conference periods; (d) campus plan with campus performance objectives; (e) specific memos from the principals or assistant principals to teachers regarding the PDAS appraisal process; (f) course offerings and descriptions; and any other written information they considered relevant to understanding the individual campus's experience with the PDAS appraisal process. In addition, the researcher reviewed information pertaining to the district and each campus contained in the Texas

Education Agency's Snapshot Publication and the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) reports of the campus and the district.

To rehearse the interview process in order to sharpen skills, the researcher conducted a practice interview with former school administrators and had colleagues observe the interview. The observers provided feedback regarding the questioning strategies, as well as made suggestions for improvement.

This researcher is qualified to serve in the role of human instrument because of his experience as a middle school teacher, adult ESL instructor, both a middle and high school assistant principal, a program specialist in the Continuing Education Division of the Texas Education Agency, and executive director for human resources in the Del Valle Independent School District. In the role of assistant principal, one of the researcher's duties was to conduct numerous teacher appraisals using the PDAS in Texas, and at the Texas Education Agency, the researcher worked for two years with the Texas state agency representatives who led the development and implementation of the PDAS in Texas. In that capacity, the researcher had access to high volumes of data and documentation regarding the PDAS in Texas. In the role of executive director for human resources, the researcher was responsible for the implementation of the district's PDAS annual activities.

Data Collection Procedures

After the elementary, middle, and high schools selected to participate were identified, the researcher contacted the superintendent's designee of the school district under study and asked for the procedures required to obtain permission to conduct the research on a particular campus. The superintendent designee was given a verbal and written overview of the study. The superintendent designee and each principal was faxed an introductory letter which included information about the researcher, an overview of the study, the significance of the research project, and the telephone number and e-mail address where the researcher could be contacted for questions.

Upon the approval of the study by the school district's Institutional Review Board (IRB), the principals were contacted to confirm the specific dates of the research project. At this point, the researcher asked each principal to send a copy of the campus master schedule, faculty lists, campus performance objectives, campus improvement plan, and other documentation that would aid the researcher.

The researcher used the standardized open-ended interview approach as the primary source of data. According to Patton (1990), one of the strengths of using this type of approach consists of reducing interviewer bias. Additionally, the researcher observed principal-teacher interactions and meetings regarding the PDAS process.

The Interview

In case study research, one of the most effective methods for obtaining information is the interview. Consequently, respondents were informed of the purpose of the study and how the results gained from the interviews would be used. An interview guide approach was used to outline a set of issues to be explored with each respondent before the interviews (Patton, 1990). This combined method of interviewing was selected for its strengths in yielding strong comprehensive data. In addition to its general comprehensiveness, the standardized open-ended interview is characterized by several strengths: (a) increased comparability of responses, (b) completion of data, (c) reduced interviewer effects and bias, (d) facility of organization and analysis of the data, and (e) permitting evaluation users to see and review the instrumentation used in the evaluation (Patton, 1990).

Interviews with principals and assistant principals were conducted on each campus. The researcher conducted one interview with each of the principals and assistant principals. The interview was conducted at the campus. This interview consisted of broad, open-ended questions. The length of the interview was approximately 45 minutes.

All interviews were scheduled on the first day of the visit. Most assistant principal interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes. Interviews were held at times selected by the participants to avoid interruption to classroom instruction. Principal interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes.

Interviews were tape-recorded using a standard cassette recorder and 90 minutes audiotapes to ensure an accurate account of everything said. The recordings were used to support findings and claims. Additionally, the researcher took notes during the interviews.

Direct Observations

In an effort to collect rich descriptive data, the researcher kept a daily journal that was used to depict observations made during each school visit. According to Yin (2003), “such observations serve as yet another source of evidence in a case study” (p. 92). Yin (2003) also writes that, “observational evidence is often useful in providing additional information about the topic being studied” (p. 93). The direct observations were informal and unstructured. These observations included interactions between principals and teachers. The researcher arrived at the school site at least one hour before classes began and observed the interactions before instruction. Throughout the day, the researcher visited classrooms, teacher lunchrooms, teacher meetings, principal meetings, and various conferences. The researcher had lunch each day with teachers and/or principals and engaged them in informal conversations.

Document Review

In order to strengthen the data collected, documents were also reviewed to support and expand the data collected. According to Yin (2003), “for case studies, the most important use of documents is to corroborate and augment evidence from other

sources” (p. 87). This researcher reviewed letters, memoranda, and other electronic communiqués from the principal to teachers regarding teacher evaluation. In addition, agendas, announcements of meetings, and other written reports relevant to the evaluation of teachers were reviewed. Finally, administrative documents such as internal records were also reviewed.

At the end of each day, the researcher reviewed all documentation and prepared a summary of interviews, direct observations, and document reviews. In addition, after each site visit, the researcher completed an overall summary of all data collected via direct observation, document review, and interviews. This process allowed the researcher to organize his thoughts and reflect on issues, problems, and concerns. Moreover, adjustments were made based upon the reflection of the daily agenda and on the data collection procedures.

By using these procedures, the researcher was able to triangulate data from different sources and strengthen the research design. Triangulating data sources means comparing and crosschecking the consistence of information derived at different times and by different means within qualitative methods. According to Patton (1990), “one important way to strengthen a study design is through triangulation, or the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomena or programs” (p. 187).

According to Yin (2003),

the most important advantage presented by using multiple sources of evidence (triangulation) is the development of converging lines of inquiry. Thus, any finding or conclusion in a case study is likely to be much more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information, following a corroboratory mode. (p. 98)

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), “triangulation of data is crucially important in naturalistic studies” (p. 283). Additionally, Lincoln and Guba write, “as the study unfolds and particular pieces of information come to light, steps should be taken to validate each against at least one other source and/or a second method. No single item of information should ever be given serious consideration unless it can be triangulated” (p. 283).

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a complex task in naturalistic inquiry. Patton (1990) suggests that the challenge is to make sense of massive amounts of data, reduce the volume of information, identify significant patterns, and construct a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that data analysis must begin with the very first data collection so as to facilitate the emergent design, grounding theory, and the emergent structure of later data collection phases. Yin (2003) adds that,

data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining both quantitative and qualitative evidence to address the initial propositions of a study. Analyzing case study evidence is especially difficult because the strategies and techniques have not been well defined. (p. 109)

The researcher analyzed the data collected from interviews, direct observations, and document reviews at the end of each site visit. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that early analysis helps the field worker cycle back and forth between thinking about

the existing data and generating strategies for collecting new, often better data. In addition, it makes analysis an ongoing, lively enterprise that contributes to the energizing process of fieldwork.

As the researcher progressed, the data were coded and categories were developed. These categories emerged from themes, related topics, and patterns.

Developing Categories

The researcher developed categories inductively. The data collected were transcribed, typed, and printed. The researcher then read the documentation and made notes of possible categories. Eventually, information was placed on note cards and sorted by school and respondent's initials. The researcher then sorted the index cards according to recurring themes.

In a multiple case study, the researcher must find commonalities among all sites. To accomplish the task of developing categories across all sites, the researcher used the same procedures used in analyzing data after each campus visit.

Trustworthiness

Studies must be trustworthy if they are to be taken as worthy and if they are to generate new knowledge. Lincoln and Guba (1985) define trustworthiness as credibility or true value, transferability, and consistency. Credibility refers to the question posed and how the results match reality. Transferability addresses the extent to which the

findings can be applied to other situations. Finally, consistency is the extent to which the study can be replicated and yield similar results.

Credibility

A major trustworthiness criterion is credibility, which is the operational criteria for the internal validity concept according to Lincoln and Guba (1985). Several strategies were employed to ensure credibility. These strategies included prolonged engagement (scope), persistent observation (depth), and triangulation.

Prolonged engagement was achieved by spending an average of three eight-hour days at each school site. In addition, the researcher corresponded with the district superintendent's designee and the campus principals two months before the beginning of the study and at least once after the study via letters, electronic mail, and telephone. Moreover, each campus principal received a copy of the section of the dissertation pertaining to his/her particular campus to make clarifications if necessary and to assure accuracy.

Triangulation was used to ensure that the phenomenon under study was accurately identified and described. The researcher conducted open-ended interviews and audio recordings of respondents, participated in direct observation, and reviewed documents.

Throughout the study, peer debriefings were used as an ongoing credibility check (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Colleagues with previous experience as campus and central office administrators were asked to review the findings as they emerged.

Transferability

In this study, transferability was supported by thick descriptions generated from the data gathering/collection at the three school sites (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The thick descriptions came from audio recordings, transcripts of the interviews, direct observations, document reviews, and written summaries of the visitation.

Transferability was enhanced by the investigation of three different sites including elementary, middle, and high schools.

Consistency

Lincoln and Guba (1985) note,

the naturalist sees reliability as part of a larger set of factors that are associated with observed change. In order to demonstrate what may be taken as a substitute criterion for reliability—dependability—the naturalist seeks means for taking into account both factors of instability and factors of phenomenal or design induced change. (p. 299)

To ensure dependability, the researcher employed triangulation. The strategies included interviewing, observing, analyzing, coding and categorizing. In addition, all the raw data were identified by school name and respondent. However, anonymity was preserved using a special coding system.

Summary

A multiple case study of one elementary, one middle school, and one high school was conducted. The purpose of this study was to illuminate the behaviors of principals in successful schools with regard to the performance appraisal of teachers. In the data collection procedures, triangulation included in-depth interviews, document reviews, and direct observations. Data analysis was inductive and occurred throughout the study and upon completion of the site visitations.

CHAPTER FOUR

Profiles of Schools

In Chapter IV, a profile for each one of the school sites is presented and is divided into four main sections. The first section of the profiles contains a description of the school site that includes both demographic and performance data. Section two of the profiles includes information on the instructional program and other school-wide initiatives. The third section contains a narrative of the interviewer's entrée into each of the school sites. The fourth and final section includes data gathered regarding individual school stakeholders such as principals and assistant principals. Each one of these sections is supported through qualitative, descriptive data used to provide rich support for each one of these sections.

Because this study focused solely upon the perceptions of principals and assistant principals in successful schools in Texas, the names of principals and assistant principals have been changed as have the names of the school districts, the schools, and the city in which they are located in order to maintain anonymity.

School A

Popham Elementary School is a successful elementary school. Students at this elementary school have performed well on the former state TAAS Test and now the state's TAKS Test. Under the former state accountability rating system, Popham Elementary School enjoyed an Exemplary rating for several years, and now in the first year of the system, they are a Recognized campus. All members of the learning

community at Popham Elementary School were proud to be associated with the school and school community and were committed to ensuring that every student at the school was successful.

Demographics and Student Performance Data

School A is located in a rapidly growing school district in south Texas that serves predominantly students from Hispanic backgrounds. Demographically, the student population in the district is 97.0 percent Hispanic, 2.3 percent White, 0.5 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 0.2 percent African American, and 0.0 (nine students) percent Native American. In addition, 72.9 percent of all students are identified and labeled Economically Disadvantaged and 47.0 percent are also classified as Limited English Proficient (LEP). The district has 22 elementary schools, eight middle schools, four high schools, three magnet schools, and one disciplinary alternative education program (DAEP) school.

The ethnic composition of School A, which serves 802 students, is 92.4 percent Hispanic, 5.9 percent White, 1.7 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 0.0 percent African-American, and 0.0 percent Native American. The percentage of students classified as Economically Disadvantaged is 57.2 percent, while the percentage of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students is 42.6 percent.

School A is one of eight elementary schools in the school district that has earned the Recognized accountability performance rating for student performance by the Texas Education Agency's performance rating system. The school had been previously

identified as an Exemplary campus for several years before the former state accountability rating system was updated in 2004. In order for an elementary public school campus to receive the Recognized rating in Texas, the campus must meet the following criteria: (a) at least 80 percent of all students and each student group (African-American, Hispanic, White, and Economically Disadvantaged) must pass each subject area of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Test; (b) the attendance rate must be at 94 percent or higher; and (c) the dropout rate must be 3.5 percent or lower for all students and each student group (African-American, Hispanic, White, and Economically Disadvantaged) (TEA, 2004).

Elementary public school students in Texas must pass both the reading and math sections of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills in grade three and each individual student must pass the reading section of the test in order to be promoted to the next grade level. In grade four, each student must take but do not have to pass the reading, writing, and math sections of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills Test. Finally in grade five, each student must take the reading, math, and science sections of the TAKS Test and must pass both the reading and math sections of the exam in order to be promoted to the next grade level.

In School A, 92.0 percent of all students passed the reading section of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills. In grade four, 98.0 percent of all students passed the writing section of the exam, and 92.0 percent of all students passed the mathematics section of the TAKS Test. Finally, 86.0 percent of all students in School A in grade five passed the science section of the TAKS Test (TEA, 2004).

School-Wide Initiatives

Gifted and Talented Education Program

Popham Elementary School is known throughout the district and the city for its Gifted and Talented (GT) Program. Over the years, both the district and the community have grown to expect a high level of delivery of instruction at this school. At the same time, the school's principal has been the campus principal for twelve years bringing a sense of consistency and development to the instructional programs at the school.

Before and after I conducted the interview on the campus, I had the opportunity to visit with other members of the community about the school, and it was evident that not only did the community members have high expectations of the school but also specifically about the school's GT program. Those parents that I spoke with, in some cases, had taken their children out of private schools to enroll them at Popham Elementary simply because of the reputation that the school enjoyed. According to them, the school's GT program, and the principal's tenure were the main reasons for enrolling their children at the school.

Ms. Martinez was very proud of her accomplishments in the GT area and the instructional practices associated with that particular program. She described the program as follows:

At Popham Elementary School, a G.T. differentiated curriculum is implemented in all classrooms as thematic, interdisciplinary lessons. Teachers have been highly trained in using high level key questioning and prompting techniques in their lessons to include depth and complexity across all disciplines using the Kaplan Model. Dr. Sandra Kaplan has served as a consultant for the district's gifted program, and our curriculum guide reflects her contributions to the program. Our G.T. teachers have served as consultants at demonstration schools

throughout the state sharing their expertise on the implementation of this curriculum. In first and second grade, we have 46 students enrolled in our program. In third, fourth, and fifth grade, we have a total of 209 students enrolled. (INT: P1: 2)

School Entry

School Location

The general and immediate areas surrounding the school have undergone rapid economic development. As a result, the school is surrounded by several small businesses found inside several shopping malls, gas stations, and restaurants. Immediately in front of the school is a large several acre track of land that is enclosed by a high chain link fence and where several expensive homes are located. This area serves as the homestead for one wealthy family in the city who had planned to live well outside of the city until the growth caught up with them.

The morning rush hour traffic is more than the infrastructure of this part of the city can handle. My interview had been scheduled with the principal first thing on Thursday morning at 8:00 a.m. I found myself rushing to be on time, but to no avail, found myself caught in the busy morning rush hour traffic on the streets immediately surrounding the school. Several buses made several stops in front of several apartments, homes, and government subsidized homes to pick up students attending Popham Elementary School.

School Facilities

A few minutes after my scheduled 8:00 a.m. appointment with the principal of the school, I arrive at the school. The school is a fairly new facility and as a result enjoys a design that is modern and that no doubt has been designed with the safety of the each student in mind. In order to enter the school with one's vehicle, one needs to drive past the school and enter through a gate found at the end of the school. I enter the gate, and I am automatically routed behind the school. I am now driving in the opposite direction from where I was driving in order to enter the school. I drive behind the school through an area reserved for buses where students are dropped off and picked up by several buses at the start and end of each day. I finally reach a parking lot at the front of the school where teachers, administrators, staff members, and visitors to the school park.

From the outside, the school has a new modern look to it. The school is a two story building with a serious maroon colored brick finish. The design of the school conveys a sense of seriousness and sophistication—a place where meaningful instruction takes place within this northwest part of town. On one side of the building immediately facing the front of the main thoroughfare are the letters Popham Elementary School as well as a marquis sign with schoolhouse color designs that displays the events for the week to take place at the school.

I parked in a slot in the far back corner of the parking lot next to a dumpster as all of the visitor parking slots and regular parking slots were taken. I gathered my research supplies that included the interview protocol, a tape recorder, and a legal pad to

take notes. I organized everything so that I could carry them comfortably and made my way to the front of the school. This exercise caused me to reflect on my career in public school education for the past twelve years. I reflected on the years that had past that I spent as a teacher, administrator, doctoral student intern at the Texas Education Agency, and now human resources executive director at a school district in central Texas. I focused upon how I had never imagined that when I received my bachelor's degree and started teaching that I would ever find myself conducting and preparing to finish a doctoral dissertation in a major area of public schooling in the United States.

Student Activity

I headed towards the front entrance of the school and my attention was interrupted as I noticed several staff members sitting at a couple of small desks, meeting and greetings parents, students, visitors, and issuing absence slips to the students. It appeared to be a successful attempt by the school to ensure that no student began the day without an absence slip. It also ensured to hold parents accountable when they dropped off their children at the front of the school to make sure that they provided the school with the proper documentation for their child's absence. I asked where the receptionist area was located, and they pointed me in the right direction.

As I entered the school, I was struck with an old memory of new teacher orientation for this same district when I started teaching here twelve years ago. One of the new teacher orientations was held at this school in the library. I arrived at the reception area of the school, and I was greeted by a lady who asked how she could help

me. I informed her that I was there to meet with the campus principal, Ms. Martinez, and told her that I was there to conduct an interview with the principal. She asked me to wait one second and called the principal on the phone to inform her that I had arrived and was there to conduct an interview. Ms. Martinez asked her to tell me to wait a few minutes, and the receptionist did as she was instructed.

Administrative Offices

I took a seat in the waiting area and observed the appearance of the inside of the school as opposed to the outside of the school. From the outside, the school looked new and modern. While the building is newer than most public school facilities, it has been used for a little over a decade and the inside of the school certainly reflects its use. Despite its use, the building is clean, displays a fairly new appearance, and is well-organized.

As I sat and waited to see the principal, several thoughts and impressions about the school ran across my mind that I feel are important to mention because of the relevance that they hold in the scope of this research study. Popham Elementary School was selected because of its proven record of high academic achievement throughout a period of time. It has been one of the elementary schools in the community that has enjoyed a consistent reputation for high student performance. Many parents of elementary school children want their children to attend this school and those that do attend miss no opportunity to inform those who ask where they attend. Because the school is located in a northwest geographical area of the city, a healthy number of

students who attend the school are children of middle class well-educated parental backgrounds with moderate to high financial means, typical of the socioeconomic patterns that stratify groups of people of similar ethnic, financial, and social backgrounds in the United States.

Consequently, in my mind, I expected to enter and see a school interior that projected a particular type of educational setting and it did. The school environment inside of the school projected a serious but child-like learning environment that was conducive to learning. While the decorations on the walls in the hallways were not necessarily elaborate, they certainly conveyed a sense of high academic rigor displayed by student work and also displayed the fun that the children enjoyed while producing the work.

Additionally, the halls, walls, and ceilings displayed educational material that would serve to decorate and promote a high sense of pride in the academic achievement that had been achieved over the years by the school. Two chairs decorated the waiting area of the school for visitors to sit as they either waited to see the administration, faculty, staff, or if they were there to pick up a student. The office suite was home to the nurse, the receptionist, the assistant principal, principal, and the teachers' workroom.

The office was also not a busy place. No parents, students, teachers, or other visitors waited to see anyone at the school. The lone receptionist answered the phone, routed the phone calls to the right place, and communicated with other staff members of the school by means of a two-way communication system. A teacher assistant came out of the teachers' workroom and asked if I had already been helped. I indicated to her that

I had as I continued to wait in the area for a few more minutes before I would be called in to the principal's office to interview her.

As I waited, many thoughts about this school raced through my mind. This school, over the years, has enjoyed a good reputation for high academic achievement. Parents in the community are proud to be associated with this campus and feel very confident that their children are receiving one of the best educations possible in the community by attending this school. The atmosphere at the school, at least during the time that I visited, felt serious though, and I thought that one of the reasons that this school probably had such a high success level was because of its serious focus on academics. My thoughts were interrupted as I was told that the principal was ready to see me, and I made my way into her office.

Principal Martinez

The principal met me inside of her office and welcomed me to Popham Elementary School. She was wearing a business suit and she shuffled several papers on her desk. She asked me how I was doing and said that we would be holding the interview in her office. She stated that she needed to take a quick phone call and to make myself comfortable. Ms. Martinez's office was a clean, well-organized office with several bookshelves. On three bookshelves sat numerous books on instructional leadership, the principalship, and other educational administration literature. In addition to these books, Ms. Martinez had several binders on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Test. It appeared that many of these binders were those

composed by district administrators to implement and integrate assessment systems uniformly across the district's schools. Finally, I also found the binder of the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS)—the comprehensive teacher evaluation system currently mandated by the state education agency and the subject of this study.

The principal's office was of a large size and the principal had taken extra work to organize and decorate it in a fashion that projected a strong sense of what the leadership of the school, mainly the principal, thought about school leadership. The office projected the principal's strong instructional focus. It gave me, as I am sure that it gave others who had visited the principal in her office, the impression that the principal was well organized, paid close attention to the details of her work, and managed the school efficiently without allowing the day to day operations of the school to sit in a pile of papers on top of her desk. Her desk was generally clear with the exception of a few papers that one could tell were newly placed items on her desk by her campus secretary. Several pictures of her family sat behind her desk giving the observer the impression that the principal not only was an effective and successful school manager, administrator, and leader but also a family-oriented person that enjoyed spending valuable time with her family, community, and friends. She was a caring and compassionate school leader.

Ms. Martinez finished with her phone call. One could tell that Ms. Martinez was the type of school leader that multi-tasked and did not do her job one thing at a time. She purposely left her door and phone lines open probably so that she could take care of

other things that needed to be taken care of and that she could do quickly without too much interruption to our meeting. My initial impressions were true as we were interrupted a couple of times by people who needed to leave the campus because of a family-related emergency and another person who needed to simply ask her about some supplies that the teacher needed. Aside from these two interruptions, we were not interrupted any further.

Ms. Martinez proceeded to ask me how my trip had gone and if I had had any trouble finding the school. I told her no. Ms. Martinez also told me that she had been curious to meet me because when I began the process to inform her that I was conducting a study and that her school had been selected based upon the selection criteria, several school district administrators who knew me had called her and asked her to help me with the study by allowing me to interview her. We continued conversing for sometime. Ms. Martinez asked me about my doctoral dissertation, my experiences at the university in the program, and public school education in the community surrounding the university. As we continued conversing, Ms. Martinez asked some more questions about the research process and stated that she would be more than willing to assist me with anything that I needed and that she would do anything that she could in order to assist me with my study. She told me to take my time during our meeting and that if I needed any additional information after our meeting was concluded that I needed only to call and ask and that she would get me any additional information that I may need. Even though Ms. Martinez was regarded as a very serious and no nonsense leader, which was

quite intimidating for me since I did not know her, I felt comfortable interviewing her, and we proceeded with the interview.

Professional Experience

Ms. Martinez had been a public school educator for 37 years. Out of her 37 years of experience, 13 were in public education in Texas. Additionally, Ms. Martinez stated that during the last 12 years, she had been an elementary principal at Popham Elementary School. It was obvious through our visit that she was a well experienced campus administrator who took her job very serious and had been very successful in her career. She explained, “I have been an educator for 37 years, 32 of which have been in Texas. I have been a principal for 12 of those years.” (INT: P1: 1)

Ms. Martinez also explained that she had been a teacher in grades k-3. She was very proud of her accomplishments in the classroom and shared some of those accomplishments with me. Specifically, she highlighted her expertise and experience in the area of gifted education. She stated that she had developed a passion, over the years, in teaching students how to think. She also explained that both as a teacher and an administrator she focused a great majority of her time in helping teachers fine tune their skills in higher order thinking skills. She explained, “my experience as a teacher was in grades k-3. I believe that my greatest achievement in the classroom was in gifted education.” (INT: P1: 1)

Finally, Ms. Martinez shared her experience in the area of gifted education with me. This information provided good evidence of her experience in gifted education. It

became evident to me as we dialogued about her experience that her passion for gifted education was deeply rooted in past quality experiences in this area. As a result, Ms. Martinez used this experience to inform her day to day instructional decisions and actions on the campus. She summarized her experiences in this area as follows:

I worked closely with Dr. Sandra Kaplan of Los Angeles, on a project in gifted education. She taught me how to reach children through higher order thinking skills and to find meaning in a room environment. I, along with three other teachers, taught in Moscow Russia for ten days in a project with Dr. Kaplan. Through many hours of hard work, I was totally motivated to help students learn to think. It has been the very heart of our magnet program here. Our teachers have continued to use the training from which I learned to enhance our program.
(INT: P1: 1)

Principal's Expectations In Teacher Evaluation

Tying closely with her experience and background in gifted and talented education, Ms. Martinez explained that she sets certain expectations with regard to teacher evaluation, shares these expectations with the staff, and then evaluates staff members based upon those expectations. In addition to those expectations, Ms. Martinez shared some of her work in teacher evaluation on the campus that she performed when she arrived to the campus as the principal. She stated that it was important for her to determine the teaching performance on the campus of each teacher. Consequently, she evaluated every staff members her first year as principal in order to promote her high expectations with the teachers on the campus. In explaining she stated:

I've been at this campus—this is my twelfth year. And so in my faculty there's very little turnover. That makes a difference, I think, when you're talking about PDAS, because the first year that I came I evaluated every single person on the campus because I wanted to get to know where they were and what their teaching styles were, et cetera. (INT: P1: 4-5)

Ms. Martinez was a successful leader, and she demonstrated how important it is to her leadership on the campus that teachers practice effective teaching skills in the area of gifted and talented education. She summarized one of her expectations as follows:

We have a GT magnet school here. And so I look—I work mostly with the curriculum, so when I do my walk-throughs and my PDAS evaluations, there's one thread that runs through all of it that I feel is very important that I actually had the teachers—they've really come up and met the expectations—and that is using the different methods that we have for our GT populations for all students. So I look at that with the PDAS. They know that that's something I expect in lesson plans and in the PDAS. (INT: P1: 4-5)

Principal's Philosophy Regarding Teacher Evaluation Systems

The principal also shared her philosophy regarding teacher evaluation as one of the actions that makes her an effective principal. She strongly believed in evaluation as a process for ensuring that teaching on the campus is taking place at high levels. She added:

I believe the instrument is effective to a point. It allows me as an administrator to go in—even when I do the walk-throughs, I do target certain points in the—each domain, and I look for specific things. If I'm going to look for higher order thinking its—overlaps in several of the different domains. So that's something that I can target. If I'm looking to see that learning is reinforced, et cetera, I see that it builds. (INT: P1: 5-6)

Ms. Martinez also explained that she believes that teacher evaluation is a process that can only be effective if leaders view it and utilize it as a long-term yearly process rather than a 45 minute evaluation. She stated:

Like I'm planning to do walk-throughs today using the PDAS as a guide and target a different thing each time I go in. I think that just 45 minutes doesn't—any teacher can put on a show for 45 minutes basically. But I think the strands that run through the PDAS are—allow me to see the effectiveness of the teaching. It pretty much covers I think everything. But in a 45-minute period I don't think it should be just geared to that. I believe more in ten minutes on a frequent basis and targeting the different things. (INT: P1: 5-6)

Leadership Actions

According to Ms. Martinez, her success as a principal was due in part to her leadership actions on the campus as a principal. Ms. Martinez felt very strongly about providing support for and taking a positive approach to helping teachers on her campus through teacher evaluation. She stated:

With new teachers I try to personally go in their classes more frequently. If I see that there is some difficulty I bring them in. I go and I tell them, I'm going to try and help you. I try to use a positive approach with them. I see some areas that we can work on together. I'm going to make these suggestions. I'd like for you to try it, and I'll come back in and I'll do another walk-through. And so I try to kind of take them under my wing, and so does one of my assistants. She actually mentors some of the new teachers. And what I don't do she does and vice versa, so that we try to give them a strong beginning. (INT: P1: 9-10)

Summary

Popham Elementary School is a successful elementary school as measured by the student performance state accountability system. The students at this elementary school had above average levels of performance on the state Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Test. In addition, the students had exceptionally high levels of academic performance in the core areas of reading, writing, and math. The school

principal, Ms. Martinez, was committed to ensuring the success of all students and was proud to be associated with Popham Elementary School.

The principal of Popham Elementary School had 37 total years of public school education experience. Out of those 37, 12 had been as the principal of Popham Elementary School. In her first year as principal, Ms. Martinez evaluated every teacher on the campus in order to evaluate the teaching level performance of every teacher at the school. The next year she divided the teacher evaluation duties between the two assistant principals on the campus and her.

Finally, the principal of Popham Elementary School maintained a strong level of accountability for the performance of teachers as measured by the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS). Ms. Martinez used the PDAS as a tool to measure a teacher's performance comprehensively, and she also used the system to impact the instructional program at the school.

School B

Pilot Knob Middle School is a successful middle school. Students on this campus have performed successfully on the state accountability rating system at high levels of performance consistently over the years. From the interview with the principal, one could gather that all members of the learning community at Pilot Knob Middle School were proud to be associated with the school and school community and were committed to ensuring that every student at the school is successful.

Demographics and Student Performance Data

School B is located in a rapidly growing school district in south Texas that serves predominantly students from Hispanic backgrounds. Demographically, the student population in the district is 97.0 percent Hispanic, 2.3 percent White, 0.5 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 0.2 percent African American, and 0.0 (nine students) percent Native American. In addition, 72.9 percent of all students are identified and labeled Economically Disadvantaged and 47.0 percent are also classified as Limited English Proficient (LEP). The district has 22 elementary schools, eight middle schools, four high schools, three magnet schools, and one disciplinary alternative education program (DAEP) school.

The ethnic composition of School B, which serves 698 students, is 87.5 percent Hispanic, 8.7 percent White, 2.1 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 1.1 percent African-American, and 0.4 percent Native American. The percentage of students classified as Economically Disadvantaged is 39.4 percent, while the percentage of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students is 10.6 percent.

School B is one of two middle schools in the school district that has earned the Recognized accountability performance rating for student performance by the Texas Education Agency's performance rating system. The school had been previously identified as an Exemplary campus for several years before the former state accountability rating system was updated in 2004. In order for a middle public school campus to receive the Recognized rating in Texas, the campus must meet the following criteria: (a) at least 80 percent of all students and each student group (African-

American, Hispanic, White, and Economically Disadvantaged) must pass each subject area of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Test; (b) the attendance rate must be at 94 percent or higher; and (c) the dropout rate must be 3.5 percent or lower for all students and each student group (African-American, Hispanic, White, and Economically Disadvantaged) (TEA, 2004).

Middle school students in public schools in Texas must pass both the reading and math sections of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills in both grades seven and eight. In grade seven, each student need only take the reading, math and writing sections of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills Test. In grade eight, each student must take the reading, math, and social studies sections of the TAKS Test.

In School B, 85.0 percent of all students passed the reading section of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills. In the writing portion of the exam, 95.0 percent of all students passed the writing portion of the exam, 91.0 percent passed the social studies section and 71 percent passed the mathematics portion of the test (TEA, 2004).

School-Wide Initiatives

Tutorial Program

Pilot Knob Middle School is a school that is known throughout the district for its high academic standards and programs. At this school, the school has started a tutorial program that specifically targets students who need assistance with preparation for the state mandated Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Exam. This program is administered after school. Each student is assessed at the beginning of the

school year with a benchmark test and each student's progress is measured throughout the year. This program has produced strong results in the area of student performance over the years.

Super Saturdays Program

The Super Saturdays Program was initiated to improve instruction at the school. This program provides an opportunity two both have fun at the school and strengthen student performance. According to Ms. Tate, this program takes place close to the TAKS date. Students receive permission from parents to spend the night on Friday night at the school and sleep overnight. In late afternoon, the students are instructed by several teachers on academic subjects both as a tutorial program and for TAKS remediation and preparation. After these sessions, students who receive permission from their parents, participate in a dance, watch movies, and spend the night in the school's gym.

School Entry

School Facilities

In contrast to my first research visit at the elementary school selected, the middle school was a complex of buildings that included an obvious new section of the school that had been recently added to an old building. This current middle school was the site of the former first high school in this school district. The school building had been vacated by the high school when the district built a new facility for the first and original

high school in the district. Upon the high school moving into the new facility, the vacated building became the site of this middle school. Now, four large high schools existed in the district.

From the outside, one could tell that the building was an old facility that had been remodeled, renovated, and added on to. As I drove into the parking lot area located at the front of the school, the first building was a recently added section that included the cafeteria, a waiting area and foyer, administrative offices, and a library. The immediate entrance into this building was part of the new addition to the school and the facilities were typical of many currently designed school buildings. The entrance was designed in a circular fashion and one encountered a large foyer area enclosed by an all glass entrance. To the left of the entrance was the cafeteria that was also enclosed in glass. The reception and administrative areas had been designed next to the cafeteria with a purpose. Both these areas had been designed so that the administration could keep a close and watchful eye upon the students in the three busiest common areas of the school.

School Location

As was the case with the elementary school research site, this school was located in the northernmost part of the city and immediately next to the district's central administrative offices. The immediate area surrounding the school had been an area of the city that housed most the elite city's population for years and now were older homes that had been bought and occupied by a growing middle class in the city. Consequently,

the population of homeowners in this area were mainly younger people who were starting families. Hence, the school worked mainly with students from mid-level and higher incomes.

The city was located off a highly traveled boulevard that connected several neighborhood streets onto this main boulevard. Although older, the homes had been well taken care of and in many cases had been remodeled. This was a busy part of the city as several businesses, convenience stores, large grocery stores, a few shopping centers, a mall, and several restaurants were all located within a two mile radius. The school was located on a corner with several entrances and exits on several sides of the school. The streets were wide and ample and consequently, the morning rush of traffic that included many school district buses and vehicles flowed smoothly through the streets.

Student Activity

As I entered the school, students were congregated outside as well as inside of the school. Some conversed, others entertained themselves with a series of games, and others were busy hurrying to finish last minute homework assignments that had not been completed the previous day. All of the students that I encountered were courteous and helpful. I asked where the main office was located and they gladly pointed me in the right direction.

Administrative Offices

The reception area was large and very peaceful. Unlike other school's busy areas, this waiting area was calm as two receptionists answered the phone and directed the morning traffic of calls, visitors, students, and employees throughout the school building. I proceeded to the counter and informed the first receptionist who asked how she could help me that I was there to see Mr. Storm the school principal and that I had an appointment to see him. She asked me for my name and then she called Mr. Storm through the phone to inform him that his next appointment had arrived. She asked me to take a seat in the waiting area and that Mr. Storm would see me in just a few minutes.

As I waited in the reception area, I noticed three wooden plaques hanging from the top of the help desk, prominently displayed for everyone to see when one entered this part of the school. The plaques were those that I had previously seen in other schools. They denoted the school's Recognized performance on the state's accountability and performance rating system. The plaques documented three consecutive years of successful student Recognized performance on the state tests.

My wait reminded me of my experience with middle school teaching and administration as I had spent eight of my last twelve years of public school service with students in middle school. However, this school was unlike those that I had worked in. This school served students from higher financial means and I wondered how much different it would be to work and teach at a school such as this one. The middle schools that I had worked in two parts of the state were very similar. The population was

diverse and the students came from familial backgrounds with parents of very low financial means.

Principal Storm

The principal walked out of his office from behind the reception area and greeted me with a handshake. This interview took place at the end of a typical work week and so the principal dressed in typical business casual clothing to end what he described as a busy week. Mr. Storm led me into to his office and informed me that he would return shortly. The principal's office was a large office that was modern looking and that was located in the new addition to the school. The office was well organized and well decorated. On one side were several large windows with a view onto the main street in front of the school. His desk was large, and the stacks of papers on the principal's desk were neatly organized giving a visitor the impression that the principal was a well organized leader that took care of the day to day operations of the school consistently and efficiently. The typical built-in bookshelves and cabinets lined the wall behind the principal's desk and work area. Several family pictures were placed on one of the shelves lining one of the side walls in the office. Immediately in front of the principal's desk was a small oval conference table where our interview would take place.

A few minutes later, the principal returned to his office and he gathered a few pieces of paper and a pen, proceeded to the conference table where I was sitting, and asked if I would like anything to drink. I asked for a cup of coffee and he asked one of the staff members outside of his office if one of them could do him the favor of bringing

two cups of coffee. He embarrassingly stated to me that he never made those types of requests, but, in this case, he wanted to make sure that both of us were comfortable so that we could take our time and allow him to carefully and thoughtfully answer the questions that I would pose to him during our interview.

As the principal walked-in, we immediately began conversing and sharing information about the research study at hand, our experiences, my plans for the future, and the growth and leadership of the district. Mr. Storm was a very easy person to talk with, but I also felt that through our conversation that he was a no non-sense, bottom-line leader. Before we began the initial interview, we engaged in discussions about education in central Texas and Mr. Storm asked me questions in comparison of the public schools in the city versus those in the central Texas area where I currently lived. Throughout the initial introductory period, we laughed and got to know each other quite well.

Professional Experience

Mr. Storm had been in education for 20 years. He explained that he had received his degree at Texas U&S University in Tatum, Texas. He received a Bachelor of Science Degree in secondary education in physical education and health. Mr. Storm further explained that he had had a fast and exciting career in school administration. His explanation suggests that he was proud of his success and the recognition of his success as he was promoted from assistant principal to principal in a short amount of time. He stated:

I got my Masters Degree at South Texas State University. I have ten years experience as a teacher/coach and ten years experience as a school administrator. I was an assistant principal for only one year (I needed more time in retrospect) and have been a principal for the last nine years. (INT: P2: 1)

Principal Experience at the School

Mr. Storm was open in discussing his experiences in his current assignment as principal of Pilot Knob Middle School. He shared that unlike his previous assignments, this school served an elite population of minority students, and consequently, it was sometimes difficult to deal with the parents of children from higher financial means. Particularly, he stated, that what presented the greatest challenge was the politics that were involved in dealing with parents of the students. For example, he shared a story about a disagreement between the parent of a student who did not make the grade and could not compete in cheerleading and himself. He stated that the parent was the district attorney in the city and consequently even the superintendent had become involved in the ordeal. Mr. Storm stated that he was not good at playing politics and that consequently this one had come back to bite him. He stated that even the superintendent had gotten upset with him because he supported the teacher and refused to change the student's grade or give her an opportunity to make up the grade.

Principal's Success in Staff Development

Mr. Storm enjoyed a reputation for developing teachers who were new and inexperienced. He was also regarded by the school community as a successful principal for his leadership in developing already successful teachers as well as weak teachers

through his belief in the formative power of the evaluation system. He believed that one of the reasons why he was regarded as a successful leader was because teachers believed that he used the evaluation system to help them get better. His comments help to demonstrate his belief in the formative strength of the evaluation system. He stated, “honestly, it’s a combination. Yes (it is a good system to help a teacher grow)—especially when you have a weak teacher. Because you know that your PDAS is going to show, you know, use of growth came out of it. So, yes, it’s a driving force.” (INT: P2: 5-6)

Principal as an Instructional Leader

Mr. Storm was also known as a strong instructional leader. Mr. Storm was a believer in using the evaluation system as a formative tool to truly help teachers become more effective teachers. He also believed that as an effective instructional leader, it was his responsibility for ensuring that teachers were successful and gained control of their classroom management. Therefore, he believed that one thing that made him successful was his ability and desire to provide training to help teachers who experienced problems in their classroom management. His statements provide an example of his belief in the system’s ability to help him identify those teachers who are in need of assistance. He stated:

Exactly. That’s the most common from the PDAS and that’s not good, you know, coming from that perspective. It should be more instructional. But the thing that will show the most in the PDAS evaluation is a poor discipline management. So, yes, that’s exactly the one I was considering when I was talking about right now. But we know you have some teachers that are weak discipline wise, so we plan for them to attend Region I discipline trainings, plus

what we do through the district. So we plan for them and we do—a lot of the discipline comes through the PDAS, it not all of it. (INT: P2: 7)

Mr. Storm believed that he was regarded as an effective instructional leader because the teachers saw him involved in the classroom on a daily basis. He stated that the evaluation system forced him to be in the classrooms evaluating instruction and this helps him to provide opportunities for growth to teachers. His thoughts about the PDAS demonstrate that he tried to help teachers grow as a result of their evaluation. For example, he stated:

PDAS forces us to be in the classroom and actually puts the teachers through that situation. That's where the walk-throughs are the difference. The walk-throughs are the real show. That's what you get. That's what you use to do the thing. But there's ways—the PDAS system is good enough now that you can maneuver around it. In other words, you know this is a dog-and-pony show. But when I was coming in here all these other times this was happening. So it gives us an opportunity to provide the growth that you needed. (INT: P2:11-12)

Assistant Principal Espinoza

The successful leadership at Pilot Knob Middle School was evident throughout the team of administrators at the school. The principal, Mr. Storm, explained that he had had the opportunity to select the campus assistant principals early on when he became principal at this school. Mr. Storm explained that shortly after he became principal on the campus he lost the two assistant principals who were at the campus. As a result, he had the opportunity to interview and select the people that he thought were the best for the job. He was pleased with his selections as he commented that he attributed a major part of his success to the work of the assistant principals on the campus.

Mr. Storm explained that Pilot Knob Middle School has two assistant principals—Mr. Jesus Espinoza and Ms. Debra Tate.

Professional Experience

Mr. Jesus Espinoza, one of the assistant principals at Pilot Knob Middle School, was a well-experienced assistant principal who contributed to the success of the school and the leadership on the campus. Mr. Espinoza had several years of experience with the school district both as a teacher and administrator. He was held in high regard both at the school and in the district. Mr. Storm had great confidence in his abilities as an assistant principal, and he valued having him as one of the assistant principals on the campus. Mr. Espinoza was proud of some of the contribution that he had made over the years both in the school and throughout the district. One of those contributions was the creation of a student code of conduct that had evolved over the years into the current school district's code of conduct. He described his experience as follows:

I have a total of 17 years of experience, all with the school district. Five of those 17 years are in Special Education as an elementary Special Education teacher and a high school Special Education teacher. I received my Bachelor of Science Degree from Dallas State University in Secondary Education with a major in political science and geography in 1986. I received a Master of Science Degree in Special Education in 1989 and a Master of Science Degree in Educational Administration in 1992. (INT: AP1: 1)

Assistant Principal Tate

Professional Experience

Ms. Debra Tate was the second and newest member of the administrative team at Pilot Knob Middle School. Ms. Tate had been recently hired at Pilot Knob Middle School as the newest of two assistant principals. Mr. Storm had hired her because of her strong instructional background and success as a high school teacher.

While Ms. Tate had been an assistant principal for two years at the school, she had a lot of experience in the implementation and integration of several instructional programs in her ten year career in public education. She stated:

This is my tenth year in the public education field. I have a Bachelor of Arts Degree in secondary education with a major in mathematics and Spanish. I also have a Masters Degree in educational administration. My ten years of experience include six years as a high school math teacher, two years as an instructional specialist, and two years as a middle school assistant principal. (INT: AP2: 1)

Ms. Tate was very proud of all of the instructional programs that she had been responsible for overseeing over the last ten years. It was obvious that she had a lot of experience in specialized public school education programs. She stated:

During the last ten years, I have been responsible in managing the following programs. At Bowie High School, I was a mathematics teacher for four years. At this school, I was also the parental involvement coordinator, UIL math coach, class sponsor, advisory member for the Health and Science Magnet Program, and member of the staff development committee. At Carter High School, I was a mathematics teacher for two years and an area specialist for two years. I was responsible for overseeing the Gifted and Talented Program for the district, trainer of trainer for Gifted and Talented Program, 504 Program, testing and data analysis, PDAS trainer for the district, TEKS instructional trainer, curriculum implementation, TAKS testing, RPTE, Bilingual Program, Special Education, Tutorial Program, and Site-Based Management. (INT: AP2: 1)

Summary

Pilot Knob Middle School is a successful middle school as measured by the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), the state's student performance accountability rating system. In addition, students specifically had high levels of performance in the core academic area of reading. The school stakeholders which included the principal and two assistant principals were committed to ensuring the success of all students, and they were proud to be associated with Pilot Knob Middle School.

The administrative team of the school was well-experienced and diverse. The principal of Pilot Knob Middle School had a total of 20 years of public school education experience. Ten out of those 20 years of experience were in campus administration at the middle school level. Assistant Principal Espinoza had a total of 17 years of experience in public school education. Twelve out of those 17 years were years of campus administrative experience. Assistant Principal Tate had a total of ten years of public school service with four of those ten years of experience were in district as well as campus administrative experience.

Finally, the principal and the two assistant principals of Pilot Knob Middle School maintained a strong level of accountability for the performance of teachers as measured by the evaluation system. Each of the administrators monitored the instructional program at the school through the PDAS and made adjustments and provided teachers with opportunities for growth as a means of impacting the instructional program at the campus

School C

Mustang Ridge High School is a successful Hispanic majority high school. The students at this high school had above average levels of performance on both the previous TAAS and TAKS exit-level examinations. In addition, the school administration was committed to ensuring the success of all students and were proud to be associated with Mustang Ridge High School.

Demographics and Student Performance Data

School C is located in a rapidly growing school district in south Texas that serves predominantly students from Hispanic backgrounds. Demographically, the student population in the district is 97.0 percent Hispanic, 2.3 percent White, 0.5 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 0.2 percent African American, and 0.0 (nine students) percent Native American. In addition, 72.9 percent of all students are identified and labeled Economically Disadvantaged and 47.0 percent are also classified as Limited English Proficient (LEP). The district has 22 elementary schools, eight middle schools, four high schools, three magnet schools, and one disciplinary alternative education program (DAEP) school.

The ethnic composition of School C, which serves 1,953 students, is 92.8 percent Hispanic, 5.6 percent White, 1.3 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 0.1 percent African-American, and 0.2 percent Native American. The percentage of students classified as Economically Disadvantaged is 52.5 percent, while the percentage of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students is 13.3 percent.

School C is one of four high schools in the school district that has earned the Recognized accountability performance rating for student performance by the Texas Education Agency's performance rating system. The school had been previously identified as an Exemplary campus for several years before the former state accountability rating system was updated in 2004. In order for a high public school campus to receive the Recognized rating in Texas, the campus must meet the following criteria: (a) at least 80 percent of all students and each student group (African-American, Hispanic, White, and Economically Disadvantaged) must pass each subject area of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Test; (b) the attendance rate must be at 94 percent or higher; and (c) the dropout rate must be 3.5 percent or lower for all students and each student group (African-American, Hispanic, White, and Economically Disadvantaged) (TEA, 2004).

High school students in Texas public schools must pass all areas of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills in order to be eligible to graduate.

In School C in grade 11, 91.0 percent of all students passed the writing section of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, 97.0 percent passed the math section, 86.0 percent passed the science section, 99.0 percent passed the social studies section, and 82.0 percent passed all sections of the TAKS (TEA, 2004).

School-Wide Initiatives

Academic Focus

Mustang Ridge High School is known throughout the district and the region as a school that is focused on high academic standards. The school and community expectations for Mustang Ridge High School have served as the driving force in the school's leadership to provide a varied and comprehensive high school experience that is characterized by high academic standards. As such, a majority of the students at Mustang Ridge graduate each year under the state's Distinguished Achievement Graduation Program, the state's Recommended High School Program, and with advanced graduation seals. A great majority of the seniors graduating each year from this school attend college and graduate successfully from college.

The school's instructional program is a comprehensive school-wide program that consists of all required state and federal programs and then is supplemented with additional instructional programs that provide students with opportunities for growth. Several of these programs include a distinguished health and science magnet program for students from across the entire district who qualify and who are selected to attend this program. In addition, the students who attend Mustang Ridge High School enjoy high levels of success on the state-wide assessment exams as well as national measures of student performance such as the SAT and ACT exams.

One of the reasons for their success on these exams include an after school TAKS Tutorial Program and a College Credit Dual Enrollment Program. The parents of

students who attend Mustang Ridge have become accustomed to expect their children to receive a high quality education at Mustang Ridge High School.

Health and Science Magnet School

The Mustang Ridge High Health and Science Magnet School Program was a program that was created several years ago and is designed as a school-within-a-school program. The school is located inside Mustang Ridge High School. The academic focus of this school is in the health and science area. Students who are selected to attend the magnet school take all of the required high school courses in addition to several courses that are specifically designed to prepare students who intend to enter the health and science field in college.

In order to attend this program, students must go through a selection process. This process includes, first and foremost, the recommendation by a middle school eighth grade teacher who is teaching the student who is recommended. Upon the recommendation, the student is invited to apply. After completing the application, the student is required to take an entrance exam and go through an interview with a committee. Once selected, the student is taken on a tour of the school and begins the enrollment process and the selection of courses.

Students who attend this school are then participants in a comprehensive high school experience. These students not only attend all classes and complete all coursework like all high school students but also participate in rotations and participate in activities where they work during school time and summers with health care

professionals in the community. Students in this program work with doctors, dentists, pharmacists in the field for part of their high school experience.

TAKS Tutorial Program

Similar to other schools in the district, Mustang Ridge High School used an after-school tutorial program designed to help prepare students for the state assessment exam and supplement the instructional program at the school. The program is conducted after school and is open to all students at the school. The school administration recognizes the importance of providing a rich high school experience for all students. Consequently, students who have demonstrated success with the exam, students who do not take the exam, and students who have not demonstrated success with the exam participate in the program.

According to the administration, this program has helped to supplement the daily instructional program at the school. In addition, administrators at this school believe that a great part of their student success on state and national exams is due to the additional help that students receive through this program.

College Dual Enrollment Classes

Mustang Ridge High School partners both with the local community college and the local university to provide dual enrollment course opportunities for students who plan to attend college. In this program, high school seniors and juniors enroll at either

the community college or the university and take college courses for which they receive both college and high school credit.

The administration at the school actively promotes the enrollment by students who qualify for this program. According to school administrators, this program has been very successful in setting expectations for students to attend college. In addition, the program has also helped to settle students' fears that they might not experience success in college. Once students attend and succeed in several of these courses, their anxieties about college begin to disappear.

Mr. Macias, one of the high school assistant principals, stated that this is a very popular program with the students and the community. In addition, it has also helped to develop and establish a reputation for high academic achievement and student success at the school by the community and in the district.

School Entry

I had finished with my interview at the elementary school and had about an hour and a half to go before the next interview at Mustang Ridge High School. I decided to head towards the general area of the school and stop for a cup of coffee at one of two Starbucks Coffee locations in the city. This one was located just a few blocks west of the campus. I arrived, pulled into the parking lot, ordered a cup of coffee, and sat down to reflect on what went well and what did not go so well with the last interview in an effort to improve for this next interview at the high school.

One of the first thoughts that crossed my mind as I sat at the coffee house and reflected upon the last interview was the correlation between the consistent high levels of student performance at all three levels and the geographical area where these three schools were located. All three schools were located in the general area of this coffee shop which was a rapidly developing area with upscale restaurants, stores, shopping centers, and homes. From the last interview, it appeared to me that the consistent high levels of performance by students were more a function of the socioeconomic backgrounds of the students than any other factor at work at any of the schools. Neither the leadership, the teaching, the comprehensive teacher evaluation system in place appeared to me to be the root cause for the well-documented consistently high levels of student academic performance. The previous principal who had been principal at the same elementary school for the past twelve years appeared to be shocked at some of the questions that I was asking her during her interview. I was somewhat secretly upset that a school leader who was held in such high regard in the school district for impacting student achievement could lack so much knowledge about the purpose of the state's teacher evaluation system.

My thoughts were interrupted as the time drew near for me to head on to the high school—the next research site. I made my way to the car and began the drive to the school. The school was located on a two lane road that was under development and the area immediately surrounding the school was populated by new high-end homes. I arrived at the school and approached the guard shack where a guard proceeded to let me drive into the parking lot and park anywhere in the visitor section of the lot.

School Facilities

This school was surrounded by a large unattractive chain link fence and the school appeared to be secure with several security officers as well as several police officers who were part of the school district's security force. This was a high school unlike those I had seen with only a couple of hall monitors and no police officers. It was obvious that in this school district security and safety were a priority. The security officers were uniformed to leave no doubt that they were watching the daily activities and the police officers walked with guns and uniforms.

As I walked into the school, the entrance led to a large foyer where students were congregated getting ready to begin the day. A visitor could tell that this was a busy place. Students, faculty, staff members, and visitors walked in and out of the building. The students directed me to the principal's office which was located directly in front of the large foyer.

Student Activity

The immediate impression that one got from the students was that these were students from healthy financial backgrounds. Most of the students were dressed in clothes that looked new. Some of the girls carried expensive designer handbags, and the boys wore their favorite professional football team's jerseys. I asked the students what they thought of the campus before I entered the waiting area, and most of them told me that it was a great place and that the teachers were excellent at their work. By looking at the decorations that were prominently displayed throughout the campus, it was apparent

that this was football season, and this was a high school that took their sports, especially football, very serious.

At this campus, I was not able to interview the principal. I had made several attempts to set up appointments with her through e-mail and her secretary and after securing a date for the interview, she cancelled the same day of the interview. Instead, I was scheduled to interview one of the assistant principals at the campus who had several years of experience working as assistant principal with the district in several campuses.

I approached the school's secretary and asked to see Mr. Macias, the assistant principal who I was scheduled to interview. She apologized on behalf of the principal and said that Mr. Macias was expecting me and that he would be with me shortly. She asked that I take a seat in the waiting area while he would come over from his office to get me.

Administrative Offices

The waiting area was a large open space that was well-decorated. Many people, mainly staff members, entered and exited the area as it was obvious that they were there to sign in and out, check mail, run copies, receive phone messages, etc. On each of the walls were well-decorated bulletin boards that displayed pictures of the students at several school sponsored events. It was obvious that this school took pride in their school spirit and represented it through their displays of student attendance at each of these activities. The morning announcements were read through the school's public

access (PA) system throughout the school announcing even more weekly events that were going to take place during the week.

Assistant Principal Macias

Mr. Macias emerged through the heavy traffic and shook my hand. He was a very young administrator who appeared to be very friendly, but at the same time very serious about his work. As he was approaching me, the PEIMS clerk stopped him in the center of the waiting area and asked him in a joking manner if he was the acting principal for the day. Mr. Macias laughed as he modestly deflected the comment and said, “no I’m not.” However, he knew that the comment suggested a sense of respect that he had earned from others on the campus through his hard work, dedication, and competence at stepping in during the principal’s absence.

Mr. Macias asked me how I was doing and told me to walk with him to his office where we would be meeting for the interview. He also apologized for the principal’s cancellation of the interview, but assured me that he could answer any question that I would have for him. He stated that because of the experience that he had as an assistant principal on several campuses for several years, he participated in the instructional program of the school and was well prepared to answer any question regarding the comprehensive appraisal of teachers.

Mr. Macias’s office was a large spacious room that had been strategically built in the middle of one of the hallways away from the main office area. It appeared as though this was one of those features that was negotiated between the architects that had

designed the school and the input of several educators who thought it would be a good idea to have an assistant principal's office located somewhere in the middle of the hall and away from the main office for the sake of easy accessibility during an emergency.

Behind his desk sat several cabinets that had been built into the wall as well as several bookshelves. On the counter-space underneath the cabinets sat a computer and several pictures of what appeared to be a young family that was just starting. Mr. Macias appeared to be a young energetic assistant principal with a future with the school district. On the bookshelves sat several books on instructional leadership, leadership in general, and other school administration books. It appeared that Mr. Macias took his job and career very seriously and was a very instructionally oriented assistant principal.

Professional Experience

Mr. Macias was a well-experienced, well-seasoned middle school, and most recently, high school assistant principal. Mr. Macias explained that during the last seven years, he had served the school district in the role of campus and district administrator. He further explained that he began his administrative career after being a history teacher for eight years in the district before he became an administrator. Mr. Macias then stated that he first started his administrative responsibilities as a curriculum specialist on one of three instructional administrative teams in the district. He performed these duties for two years. Mr. Macias then became a middle school assistant principal for another two years before he began his last, and most recent, administrative assignment.

Mr. Macias's last assignment was that of high school assistant principal at Mustang Ridge High School. Mr. Macias had been recruited by the current principal at the school because Mr. Macias had earned a well-respected high level reputation for being a successful assistant principal. Among his many achievements, Mr. Macias was well-known for being a competent administrator, an innovative instructional leader, and a student-centered assistant principal. Mr. Macias was good for kids.

At the school, Mr. Macias had been responsible for starting and implementing several school-wide programs that had impacted the success of the school. These programs included an after-school TAKS tutorial program, a Saturday TAKS program, and overseeing the school's dual enrollment college program. Mr. Macias was very proud of his contributions both to the district and to the school community as a whole.

Administration's Successful Support for Teachers

At Mustang Ridge High School the administrators worked throughout the school year to provide support for the teachers on the campus. This was one of Mr. Macias's chief responsibilities on the campus. It was evident, through his description of how the administration at the school identified teachers on the campus who needed support, that his efforts in this regard made him a successful leader on the campus and helped him to gain the respect of all the teachers on the campus. He explained how the campus administration, through his direction, provided support for the teachers. He stated:

Well, we can do it based on two needs. If it's a teacher in need of assistance, we look at what they give us in their self-report. And sometimes they're asking us. Now, if it's—if we're seeing that—if the teacher's requesting it then we make an

effort to try and provide them with that training. I mean—and, again, sometimes we're limited by funds. On their self-report there's an area where it says, describe any future training. And that's where we look at that and see, well, if we can accommodate you, yes, we will. Now, we designate people that—I mean, if that person is in need of assistance, then we will provide—we come up with a plan to provide specific trainings that we would like to—that teacher address. (INT: AP3: 7-8)

Mr. Macias was a strong believer that the success that he enjoyed as a campus administrator at this school and as well as the other administrators derived from their sincere efforts to provide support to their teachers through staff development opportunities. In addition, this was the one area of their practice that they were the most proud of. This can be assumed by the following description.

Now, during the year, if we have a teacher—or we try and—normally what we'll do to help the teacher, as far as trainings or anything to help them out in the classroom, as far as instruction, the district is—we try and target people to provide them with—whether it be subject content area training or whether it be something else, whether it be discipline or anything else in their classroom—we do provide the trainings for them. And in those sometimes we are allowed to generate a whole group—say, by department—or we go by need, you know. So if we see that a teacher needs an area and certain things like that. (INT: AP3: 9)

Summary

Mustang Ridge High School is a successful high school as measured by the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills Test. The students at this high school had above average levels of performance on the exit-level TAKS examination. In addition, the attendance rate for students was high and the dropout rate was low. The assistant principal and the administration of the school were committed to ensuring the success of all students and were proud to be associated with Mustang Ridge High School.

The assistant principal of Mustang Ridge High School had worked a total of 13 years in the public education field. Five out of those 13 were specifically years of campus administrative experience. In his tenure as assistant principal at the school, Mr. Macias was responsible for overseeing the implementation of several school-wide initiatives aimed at improving the level of student academic performance.

Finally, the assistant principal as well as the other campus administrators maintained a strong level of accountability for the performance of teachers as measured by the evaluation system. The campus administrators monitored the performance of students regularly and made modifications to the instructional program at the school as a result of teacher evaluation activities on the campus.

Table 4.1 Participants' Profile

Elementary Principal

<i>Education</i>	<i>Experience</i>	<i>Number of Years</i>
B.A. Elem. Ed.	Teaching Experience:	25 yrs.
M.S. Ed. Adm.	Administrative Experience:	12 yrs.
	Total years of experience:	37 yrs.

Middle School Principal

<i>Education</i>	<i>Experience</i>	<i>Number of Years</i>
B.S. Sec. Ed. Health, P.E.	Teaching Experience:	10 yrs.
M.S. Ed. Adm.	Administrative Experience:	10 yrs.
	Total years of experience:	20 yrs.

Middle School Assistant Principal 1

<i>Education</i>	<i>Experience</i>	<i>Number of Years</i>
B.S. Sec. Ed. Pol. Sci., Geog.	Teaching Experience:	5 yrs.
M.S. Ed. Adm.	Administrative Experience:	12 yrs.
M.S. Sp. Ed.	Total years of experience:	17 yrs.

Middle School Assistant Principal 2

<i>Education</i>	<i>Experience</i>	<i>Number of Years</i>
B.A. Sec. Ed., Math, Spanish	Teaching Experience:	6 yrs.
M.S. Ed. Adm.	Administrative Experience:	4 yrs.
	Total years of experience:	10 yrs.

High School Assistant Principal 3

<i>Education</i>	<i>Experience</i>	<i>Number of Years</i>
B.S. History	Teaching Experience:	8 yrs.
M.S. Ed. Adm.	Administrative Experience:	5 yrs.
	Total years of experience:	13 yrs.

CHAPTER FIVE

Research Findings and Data Analysis

The research findings in response to the research questions that guided the study are discussed in Chapter V for each one of the three schools (elementary, middle, and high school) in the multiple case study. Chapter V is divided into two sections: a) individual analysis of each site, and b) cross-site analysis of the two sites.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify elementary, middle, and high school principals' perceptions regarding their instructional leadership actions in the performance appraisal of teachers in successful schools in Texas. The focus was on instructional leadership actions that serve to enhance efforts at improving teaching and learning through a comprehensive teacher evaluation system in Texas.

School A

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of elementary, middle, and high school principals regarding how they use the performance appraisal of teachers as a basis for improving instruction in successful schools in Texas?

The interview of the elementary school principal regarding how she uses the performance appraisal system for teachers in Texas as a basis for improving instruction at her school yielded seven emerging themes. These themes include: (a) setting clear

expectations, (b) monitoring and supervising instruction through the use of consistent walk-through observations, (c) viewing the PDAS as a process rather than an instrument, (d) adopting a multi-year PDAS evaluation process, (e) aligning the instructional leadership actions to the PDAS domains and monitoring implementation and integration of those actions, (f) connecting campus staff development activities to the PDAS, and (g) using the PDAS to ensure compliance with district and campus policies, procedures, and rules.

Setting Clear Expectations

Data revealed that one of the instructional leadership actions that the elementary principal used with regard to teacher evaluation on the campus was setting clear expectations for both campus administrators and teachers. To this end, the principal divided teachers by program assignments and then rotated each year so that none of the administrators evaluated the same teacher in consecutive number years. Further, the principal cited a small turn-over rate on the campus. By setting clear expectations every year, the principal set part of the instructional tone on the campus at the beginning of each school year. The following comments support the importance of setting clear expectations:

As a matter of fact, we just divided it. We—like I tell you, our staff has been here—we know them very well and we’ve evaluated them for several years. So we divided—and we rotate so that none of us get the same people. For a long time—for I would say maybe four or five years, I did all of the GT teachers, and then I trained the administrators on what to look for if it was a GT lesson. And now that we all can share we all rotate. If I move—for example, I moved this lady into a GT setting, so she’s automatically going to be evaluated by me

because she's new to whatever she's working with with the students. And then we rotate so that—next year we'll rotate again—so that we all see everybody on a 45—annual 45-minute time. (INT: P1: 6-7)

Monitoring and Supervising Instruction

Data revealed that the elementary principal used the performance appraisal system for teachers to monitor and supervise instruction. To achieve this, the principal considered the PDAS more of a process than an instrument. Further, the principal used the PDAS to consistently conduct ten minute walk-through observations. This use of the system allowed the principal to ensure that teachers used instructional strategies correctly. Moreover, this practice also helped the principal monitor and measure a teacher's compliance with all of the instructional leadership actions that the principal expected to be tied to each of the PDAS domains and specific criteria in each of those domains. As the principal commented:

...I'm planning to do walk-throughs today using the PDAS as a guide and target a different thing each time I go in. I think that just 45 minutes doesn't—any teacher can put on a show for 45 minutes basically. But I think the strands that run through the PDAS are—allow me to see the effectiveness of the teaching. It pretty much covers I think everything. But in a 45-minute period I don't think it should be just geared to that. I believe more in ten minutes on a frequent basis and targeting the different things. (INT: P1: 6)

In addition, Ms. Martinez also considered the PDAS to be a comprehensive teacher evaluation system that allowed her to monitor the teachers' adherence to her instructional leadership expectations. The principal accomplished this by ensuring that the domains and each of the criteria under those domains were consistent with her instructional leadership actions. She noted:

My expectations make a difference, too. If I can use it according to my expectations—if you see what I’m saying—a magnet GT teacher—my expectations of the integration of the curriculum and the way they use the thematic curriculum is very different to what I would expect of a teacher that has—that I’m expecting just to use the thinking skills. But I can use this instrument to cover all of those areas because they already know what I’m expecting because I do sit with them before I do a PDAS. And a teacher, for example, that I’m expecting to show a GT lesson I sit and look at the lesson and give her ideas before if it’s a first time. (INT: P1: 20-21)

According to the principal, the school was home to a well recognized Gifted and Talented (GT) Program. As a result, the program required an enormous amount of attention from the principal. As a result, the elementary principal revealed that she required herself to carefully and consistently monitor the instructional strategies that the teachers were using in teaching the students enrolled in this magnet school. As such, she stated that the criteria in each of the domains and the domains themselves on the PDAS were constructed effectively to capture a teacher’s effective use of instructional strategies:

We have a GT magnet school here. And so I look—I work mostly with the curriculum, so when I do my walk-throughs and my PDAS evaluations, there’s one thread that runs through all of it that I feel is very important that I actually had the teachers—they’ve really come up and met the expectations—and that is using the different methods that we have for our GT populations for all students. (INT: P1: 5)

Central to the instruction within this GT magnet program as well as to the instruction in the school were the implementation and integration of the effective use of instructional methods and instructional strategies to improve instruction at the school. According to the data, the principal viewed the PDAS as an effective evaluation system

that allowed her to monitor the implementation of specific teacher instructional behaviors for the improvement of instruction. She noted:

If I'm going to look for higher order thinking it's—overlaps in several of the different domains. So that's something that I can target. If I'm looking to see that learning is reinforced, et cetera, I see that it builds. Like I'm planning to do walk-throughs today using the PDAS as a guide and target a different thing each time I go in. (INT: P1: 5-6)

The principal further elaborated by stating, “are they using the appropriate materials? Are they working with students—are they reinforcing skills according to what we expect? Do they follow the grading policy? All of those things are part of that.” (INT: P1: 23)

The data also revealed that the evaluation component the principal felt impacted student achievement and her actions as an instructional leader, was the ability of the school principal to conduct more frequent walk-throughs in new teachers' classrooms. The principal cited her use of the PDAS instrumentation as a guide to look for certain teaching behaviors in the classroom. In return, the data that she gathered from these visits, she used to help develop the teachers on the campus who were new and inexperienced. The following comments support her work. She stated:

...With new teachers I try to personally go in their classes more frequently. If I see that there is some difficulty I bring them in. I go and I tell them, I'm going to try and help you. I try to use a positive approach with them. I see some areas that we can work on together. I'm going to make these suggestions. I'd like for you to try it, and I'll come back in and I'll do another walk-through. And so I try to kind of take them under wing, and so does one of my assistants. She actually mentors some of the new teachers. And what I don't do she does and vice versa, so that we try to give them a strong beginning. (INT: P1: 9-10)

Essentially, the principal used the comprehensiveness of the PDAS to effectively monitor and supervise the instructional program at the school. The principal set the expectations at the beginning of the year, trained teachers and the other campus administrators in the instructional strategies that she identified for the use with the general student and special program area populations and then she monitored the use of those strategies consistently with the help of the PDAS process.

Viewing PDAS as a Process Rather Than an Instrument

Data revealed that the principal perceived the PDAS as a process rather than an instrument that if used effectively would lead to the improvement of instruction at the campus. According to this principal, unlike other comprehensive teacher evaluation systems, the PDAS if considered a year-long process is effective for impacting instruction.

According to the principal, the former TTAS system was a one visit a year observation instrument that only rendered a limited amount of data and that data was not effective for evaluating teachers comprehensively. On the other hand, the principal noted the PDAS provided for walk-through observations, the use of the campus performance as a whole, and the use of year long activities that teachers engaged in that yielded a picture over time about a teacher's performance on the campus. She further stated that one 45 minute visit was not sufficient and that continuous unannounced observations were more important. The following comments support her perceptions:

I think that just 45 minutes doesn't—any teacher can put on a show for 45 minutes basically. But I think the strands that run through the PDAS are—allow me to see the effectiveness of the teaching. It pretty much covers I think everything. But in a 45-minute period I don't think it should be just geared to that. I believe more in ten minutes on a frequent basis and targeting the different things. (INT: P1: 6)

The data revealed that the principal perceived a one time 45-minute component of the evaluation system to be impossible for the campus administrator to evaluate a teacher effectively. She further stated that this was only one component of the system. The principal revealed that she used this observation as well as all other data that related to a teacher's performance and then she would put it all together to capture a greater reality:

I still think a one-time visit is not the most effective. And I know that we're supposed to do walk-throughs. But I guess it depends on how you use it. Let me tell you how I use this instrument and—see, I script everything when I go into a classroom. I can script word-for-word exactly—and then I go back and I really look at it—kind of like what you're going to do here. You're going to go back and you're going to listen. And then I tie it to all—I try to see, did I find all of these things in this 45-minute time period. (INT: P1: 27-28)

Adopting a Multi-year Evaluation Process

The data revealed that the principal used motivational strategies to keep the faculty at the campus happy. By employing a healthy and motivated staff, the principal positively impacted instruction.

Consequently, the principal expressed praise for the central administration of the district for adopting an optional multi-year evaluation process for those teachers who held a documented record of success on three consistent previous evaluations. The study revealed that the principal adopted this move because it served as a great

motivator and reward for successful teachers on the campus. The following comments provide an example:

Next year they have changed our PDAS to be alternating years. If somebody's been on a campus for three years and has been evaluated—and they're—they are, you know, doing fine, then they don't have to be evaluated next year. But I think that's an incentive for these teachers, because these are tenured teachers. And, I mean, that's kind of a plus for them and for us, too. So I think that's a good thing for our district. (INT: P1: 7-8)

The principal further explained that for a campus similar to that at which she was principal a multi-year evaluation calendar was a great motivator for teachers. She stated that her campus was performing at high levels of student success and that the turnover rate for teachers was at an all time low. This indicated, according to her, that the present faculty on the campus was responsible for the current levels of student performance. Since most of them had proven their competence, she felt very strong that they did not need to be evaluated every year. To this she stated, "I think on this campus it's not necessary every year. I think that they're tenured teachers, and I think every other year, which our district's going to enroll, will help them a lot." (INT: P1: 43)

Aligning Instructional Leadership Actions to the PDAS Domains

Data revealed that the elementary principal aligned her instructional leadership actions to the evaluation system. To this end, the elementary principal encouraged teachers to use effective classroom management techniques, classroom arrangement techniques, effective motivational strategies, and reinforce effective teaching. The main

focus of these efforts was to align the instructional leadership actions of the principal to the evaluation process in order to capture effectively both teaching and learning.

The principal of Popham Elementary School made sure that her instructional leadership actions on the campus were consistent both with the eight PDAS Domains and each of the criteria under those domains. She explained that as a campus principal, she tied her instructional leadership actions very closely to those that are built into the evaluation system. She stated that the criteria under each of the PDAS domains is very effective at capturing several teacher instructional behaviors. These behaviors are the same as the instructional leadership actions that she uses in leading and managing the campus both in the instructional and non-instructional related areas. Those actions include:

Everything from classroom management to classroom arrangement to, of course, the curriculum that they're teaching, the motivational strategies they're using. How are they reinforcing what they're teaching? Are they just—because what I've seen sometimes is that they are teaching, but the children—in other words, they think because they've taught it the children have mastered it. (INT: P1: 11)

When asked about other specific instructional leadership actions that she performed on the campus that were consistent with the domains and criteria on the PDAS, the principal both asked and responded with the following comments, “in other words, is the instrument effective in helping me identify needs and providing for those needs?” (INT: P1: 20)

When asked to elaborate further and explain if by identifying needs she meant the instructional strategies that were a part of her instructional leadership actions on the campus, she responded:

I'd say yes. I think it covers the majority of the areas. It allows for growth plans, it allows for—it pretty much covers every area I think—the different domains. I think it does, because I think it's generic enough that it does that. But this instrument (PDAS) would still cover, regardless of whether it's—or whatever the situation is. I think that it's very positive in that sense—and pretty thorough. (INT: P1: 20-21)

Connecting Staff Development to PDAS

Data revealed that the elementary principal used the comprehensive teacher evaluation system to identify and provide staff development and training opportunities for teachers. The principal's use of the system to achieve this goal centered upon her use of the Teacher Self-Report (TSR) to plan annual staff development activities. Furthermore, the principal's efforts in this regard began at the end of the school year as teachers submitted their reports. Consequently, the study revealed that in most cases the staff development activities were one year behind.

According to Ms. Martinez, while she has always ensured the development of a healthy staff development calendar, the activities on that calendar are a function of two separate factors. She explained that the foremost driving force for the selection of staff development and training events on the calendar are the core academic subject areas that are tested on the state student exams. These had a minimal to zero connection to the state teacher evaluation system. On the other hand, the second factor that she considers when developing the staff development school calendar is all the teacher responses on one section of the Teacher Self-Report that teachers are required to fill-out every year.

Ms. Martinez further discussed that while the TSR is a great tool for surveying the staff development needs of the teachers on the campus, the process for the collection

of all of the survey data takes one academic year to complete. Consequently, in many cases, while still relevant, the staff development activities on the calendar are one year behind. According to Ms. Martinez, this was not necessarily a setback of the system.

She made it a point to speak candidly about this particular attribute of the system:

Honestly, by the time we do the evaluations, I've already assessed what the needs are, if you want to know the truth, because we—you know, they do that self-report, too, where they really talk about what they want. And I use it for the following year more than I do the year in process because they actually tell—I really feel that if I had this—well, they give us a list of what they've done, what staff development they've gone through, and then they talk about what they would like to do. So I find that—the instrument I don't see it as helping that much for that particular year. I do see it helping with surveying as far as what our site base is going to look at for staff development the following year. (INT: P1: 15)

The principal went on to explain the connection with the staff development calendar and the year long teacher evaluation process with the following comments:

Sometimes you don't do a PDAS until the spring semester. Well, right now (fall semester) is when we're really trying to get people into staff development because now's a time they need the strategies and also the time they need all the ideas and—because by the time the spring comes we're into the testing mode and then we're closing down, so—that's kind of how I see that. (INT: P1: 16)

When the principal was asked for confirmation that several of the staff development activities on the campus were directly tied to the PDAS, she remarked:

Oh, yes, it is. Yes. And it's not necessarily a bad thing. It's just—it's—yes, I kind of—I think I'd say it's kind of a year behind because you're projecting what your needs are for the next year in staff development, and then you're working on doing that staff development at the same time you're sending people, and then you get their ideas of what helped you, what didn't help you. So I do see it as kind of a year behind. And I'm not sure they could do it any other way. You know—I don't mean that it's a bad thing. It's just the way it's set up. (INT: P1: 16-17)

Upon identifying the staff development and training needs of the campus, the principal of Popham Elementary School used a variety of means to meet the staff development needs of the teachers on the campus. The principal recognized the importance of enlisting both internal and external sources to provide the staff development activities. In some cases, she used the district resources through the central administration. The district administrators sometimes provided the workshops. In other cases, she, herself, conducted trainings and workshops for the teachers. And finally, she stated that at times, teacher collegiality, worked best. At other times, the more experienced teachers on the campus as well as other campuses conducted the trainings. She stated:

We've done things such as—well, bringing people in, of course—you know, bringing in people from our area. Let's say that a teacher's having difficulty with X whatever area—whether it's reading, whether it's thinking skills, we can bring people in through grade level. I do most of my staff development through grade level meetings. I don't do much after school or Saturdays, because I feel that you get the most from the teachers during that time. In addition, the teacher can go to maybe an out-of-town staff development in the same area. (INT: P1: 18-19)

Of particular importance were the principal's responses regarding the use of grade level meetings to conduct some of the staff development and training sessions. The principal stated that when she conducted the trainings, she held them during these meetings because she felt that the teachers would be more active participants if the sessions were conducted during the workday during grade level meetings. She believes the trainings are more effective and the teachers take greater ownership of the information being presented when the meetings take place during the workday.

Ensuring Compliance with Policies, Regulations, and Operating Procedures of the State, the School District, and the Campus

Data revealed that the principal used the PDAS to comply with the policies, regulations, and operating procedures of the state, the school district, and the campus. According to the principal, the PDAS was a useful tool to help school leaders ensure that all teachers comply with the direction that the school administration is taking. Further, the principal used the PDAS to ensure that teachers on the campus are following both internal and external directives. She described some of these directives as those dealing with (a) classroom management and student discipline, (b) compliance with bilingual policies and procedures, (c) the use of appropriate instructional materials, (d) working with students of all grade levels appropriately, (e) reinforcing the skills that are taught, and (f) adherence to the school's grading policy. These were only a sample of the many rules and laws that school districts are now required to follow as a result of increasing accountability measures both at the state and federal levels. She identified some of these as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act at the federal level and the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) at the state level. The principal described the usefulness of the PDAS's summative attribute in the following regard:

Yes I think one of the areas is—not only through instruction, but I think—I was looking here at policies, procedures, compliance with issues. It's very—I think it backs us up on that. You know, when you give a directive you send a memo out. That way they—it kind of—I think it keeps teachers in line so to speak. You know, they know that they're—through the PDAS they can be marked down if they're not going to comply with a directive or with a policy. Yes, I think it's—I think it's effective. (INT: P1: 22)

The principal also stated that while the PDAS was useful to ensure compliance with certain rules the instrument was also useful to promote unity and motivate teachers on the campus through the compliance of certain state policies. She stated:

There's other things—I think, you know, you just jogged my memory. But like on to the campus ratings that are tied to the PDAS—The—okay. You have to understand that I think it's good that each—that your campus rating affects it because I think it causes unity in working together so that we all can benefit from giving it our best and having that discourse. I'm all for that. But I think when they know, Wow, you know, I'm going to get these extra points because our campus did well—and it's not just my class or my grade level, but the entire campus worked together, then I think—yes, I think that's very, very helpful to the teachers—and motivating. (INT: P1: 22-23)

The principal believed that a safe work environment is very important in order to achieve high levels of both teaching and student performance. When asked if she thought that the PDAS was a good instrument to ensure the safety of all the members of the school community, she responded:

Uh-huh. Discipline. Uh-huh. Yes, their duties, are they using the discipline plan that the district has outlined, are they in compliance with the bilingual policy that our—that we have—or the plan that our school has adopted—all of those things. Are they using the appropriate materials? Are they working with students—are they reinforcing skills according to what we expect? Do they follow the grading policy? All of those things are part of that. Uh-huh. Yes. I think so. I think—I really do. (INT: P1: 23-24)

Overall, the principal of Popham Elementary School espoused a perception of a strong connection between the stated teacher evaluation system, the PDAS, and academic achievement. The principal recognized and through a rich dialogue described both the summative and formative functions of the PDAS that she felt were useful in improving student achievement on the campus. She explained how she viewed the PDAS as a comprehensive process rather than an instrument that is used to measure a

teacher's performance during a one-time, 45 minute observation such as the former Texas Teacher Appraisal System (TTAS) system.

In addition, the principal also described the importance of providing staff development and training opportunities for teachers as a means of improving student achievement. She described this as one of the strongest components of her instructional leadership. It was her belief that the PDAS through several of its components, mainly the Teacher Self-Reports (TSR), helped her achieve this part of her leadership. According to the principal, each year, she used the teachers' responses on the TSR to build the staff development calendar of activities for the school.

Finally, the principal felt that compliance with school district, state, and federal mandates was also an important part of her instructional leadership. She stated that the utility of the instrumentation of the PDAS process was very important in the success of the school.

Summary

At Popham Elementary School, the data revealed that the campus administration used the Professional Development and Appraisal System in a variety of ways to improve instruction at the school. For example, the data revealed that at the beginning of each school year, campus administrators set clear expectations with the campus faculty and staff regarding the professional development and appraisal activities and expectations for the school year. In addition, administrators also used the system to (a) monitor and supervise instruction through the use of consistent walk-through observations, (b) viewing the PDAS as a process rather than an instrument, (c) adopting

a multi-year PDAS evaluation process, (d) aligning the instructional leadership actions to the PDAS domains and monitoring implementation and integration of those actions, (e) connecting campus staff development activities to the PDAS, and (f) using the PDAS to ensure compliance with district and campus policies, procedures, and rules.

The data further suggested that the administrators' consistency in using the Professional Development and Appraisal System, in the above-mentioned ways, contributed to the success of the students as well as the overall success of the campus.

School B

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of elementary, middle, and high school principals regarding how they use the performance appraisal of teachers as a basis for improving instruction in successful schools in Texas?

The perceptions of the middle school principal regarding his use of the PDAS as a basis for improving instruction on the campus were positive in support of the PDAS as an effective tool for improving instruction. The principal used several of the features of the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS) in order to carry out his duties as an effective and successful instructional leader. The themes that emerged from the data include: (a) setting clear expectations, (b) adopting a multi-year evaluation process, (c) monitoring instruction and conducting walk-throughs, (d) supporting novice teachers and teachers in need of assistance, (e) planning for staff development and training, (f) planning for instruction and setting goals, and (g) using the PDAS as a summative tool.

Setting Clear Expectations

Data revealed that the middle school principal focused on setting clear expectations regarding the evaluation procedures as a means for ensuring that the instructional program was improved for the school year. To this end, the principal met with staff members at the beginning of the school year to inform them of updates, timelines, evaluation assignments, and to inform teachers of what was expected. The principal described his actions as follows:

Well, obviously, at the beginning of the year we assure that everybody's got their training for the year. Part of our beginning of the year trainings—staff developments is that we give a little reminder as to what's expected. We do a little presentation on PDAS. The new staff—we give them a thorough—the district does maybe give them a thorough presentation on the PDAS. It's mostly done—it's actually been done by one of my administrators. (INT: P2: 2-3)

With regard to who is primarily responsible for the implementation of the PDAS on the campus, the principal stated: “the particular vice principal you're saying? Obviously, the administration. I've got two administrators but myself. So we're all involved in doing the presentation. But I've got one that's more curriculum oriented, so she does the actual presentation.” (INT: P2: 3)

Additionally, Mr. Espinoza, one of the assistant principals at Pilot Knob Middle School reiterated the principal's comments regarding the campus administrative team's activities at the beginning of the year. Mr. Espinoza explained that at the beginning of every year, the campus principal met with the assistant principals to issue evaluation assignments and to convey the principal's expectations regarding the assistant principals' evaluation duties. After the principal met with the other campus

administrators, the administration then met with all of the faculty to share the evaluation procedures regarding their evaluation for the school year. Mr. Espinoza explained:

The principal of the school and the other assistant principal. We do the training, we share the—at the beginning of the year we share the responsibility—the making sure everybody's trained, and they get their yearly updates. And we set up our conference times with them—the pre-conference. You know, we do our visit, whenever that may be. They're in December. You always try to start out as early as you can in order to not be—not get caught up in there in between TAKS and all that other thing that goes on in the springtime. And then you set up your post-conference. (INT: AP1: 3)

Additionally, Ms. Tate, also an assistant principal at the school shared that the setting of clear expectations not only comes from the campus principal but also from the district administration. Ms. Tate credited the central administration for developing timelines, multimedia presentations, and for essentially setting district expectations for each of the campus administrators regarding teacher evaluation activities on the campus. She stated:

Well, we have a district time line, so that's mainly what I use. We train the teachers at the beginning of the year. They tell us by this day the teachers have to submit the first part of the PDAS. And actually what we did this year, the district provided us with—there was some changes on the PDAS. I think it was domain eight—if I'm not mistaken—because I train the teachers. So the district human resource came up with a presentation—a Power Point presentation. And that's mainly what I use to train the teachers and to inform them of any changes. (INT: AP2: 4)

Ms. Tate further described the specific leadership actions that she performed on the campus on an annual basis to share her expectations regarding the PDAS as the following:

You know, I do it as a group. You know, I do provide—if they have a one-to-one. But usually I get all my people that I'm evaluating, you know, do observations, and you know that everybody's different and they're looking for

different things. I mean, they should be looking for the same thing, but we all have different perceptions of things. And so I usually—I meet with them, and, you know, I list—you know, this is Domain I through VIII or whatever. For Domain I this is—even though it specifically says on the PDAS, I go a little bit above and beyond, like—for example, to include on this sub-domain I’m looking for high order thinking skills. And for this other domain I’m looking for student/teacher interaction—that you’re actually praising the students. You know, I guess I provide the teachers a little bit more specifics of what it is I’m looking for. (INT: AP2: 12)

Adopting a Multi-year Evaluation Process

The data revealed that the middle school principal supported a proposed district directive to adopt and implement a multi-year evaluation process. As such, the principal embraced a process by which teachers who had demonstrated documented success in previous evaluations would be evaluated every other year.

The principal of Pilot Knob Middle School stated that the district administration had decided to follow the section of the law that gives school districts the option of adopting and implementing a multi-year evaluation process. Mr. Storm explained that he perceived this move by district administrators to be a good one because on a large campus such as his the evaluation of several dozen teachers consumes a large amount of his time. He further explained that on a campus such as Pilot Knob Middle School where the turnover rate of teachers is very low, the need does not exist to evaluate teachers every year. Mr. Storm implied that this move was a positive one that would impact his instructional leadership actions by allowing him more time for other instructional tasks and would help him to promote a positive campus climate that would indirectly impact the instructional climate.

Mr. Storm explained that at the beginning of every year, the campus administrators, including himself, gave teachers an overview of the PDAS as required by state law every year. At that time, he stated that he had informed the teachers that the district had adopted a multi-year evaluation process. He stated:

I often have some input doing a presentation, especially when there's a change, like this year that—you know, we're talking about how we're going to be doing the—this will probably be a—either that or maybe you understand at this school district we're going to be doing it every other year. (INT: P2: 2-3)

When the principal spoke about the direction that the district administration had taken with regard to a multi-year teacher evaluation process, he stated the following, “...I agree with what the district is doing because it's too time consuming. You know, as an administrator, I have a large campus—that it takes too much of your time—when the teachers that you know what they're doing.” (INT: P2: 11-12)

After expressing support for the adoption of a multi-year evaluation plan for successful teachers, the principal explained why he supported this move and offered the following justification:

...And having said that, I still go back to saying that, you know, well, Teacher A, he's been with us for 15 years. I know what Teacher A's doing. I don't think we need to do the observation every single year because we know what he's doing and I can't stop doing that. But we don't need to stop a whole day to do this particular thing. And, you know, how do you—how will I do Teacher A, who's been doing it for 15 years—not do Teacher A and I go back over here and this teacher who's brand new and I'm going to do the whole thing. So I understand the complexities of that. I cannot not do Teacher A and do this teacher over and over again. (INT: P2: 19)

Monitoring Instruction by Conducting Walk-Throughs

Data revealed that the middle school principal used the PDAS as a mechanism for monitoring instruction on a consistent basis. To this end, the middle school principal used this feature of the system to perform periodic unannounced visits to teachers' classrooms to ensure the delivery of a high quality level of instruction.

The principal of Pilot Knob Middle School cited the walk-through requirement in the PDAS comprehensive evaluation process as an important factor in his instructional leadership activities on the campus. He stated that because the PDAS process requires evaluators to create a picture over time of a teacher's classroom performance through the use of walk-through observations, this allows campus evaluators to monitor instruction and to make adjustments in the instructional program of the school. He stated that the difference between a good campus and an excellent campus is the number of walk-throughs that campus evaluators conduct. He stated:

Obviously, we do walk-throughs. And I'll be the first one to tell you that we don't do enough of them. And—because you're taping I'm going to tell you that it is my formal opinion that the walk-throughs is the difference between being a good campus and not a very good campus. So we don't do enough of them. We have a good campus, but we don't do enough of them. (INT: P2: 4)

Mr. Storm also explained that in the school district the superintendent, several years ago, created two instructional teams of administrators whose primary responsibility is to serve the instructional needs of each of the campuses in the district. He stated that these teams have been in existence for about eight years and that quite often he enlists their efforts when he is making instructional decisions about the campus. With regard to the teacher evaluation process, he stated that currently, members from

one of the teams are working with an English as a Second Language Teacher (ESL) on the campus who is having difficulty teaching. He stated that the team members have been very helpful in this situation. When asked if the team members conducted walk-throughs as part of their assistance with this teacher, he stated that not only did the team members conduct walk-throughs but that he also considered the data gathered from these walk-throughs in the overall evaluation of the teacher:

So to answer the question, yes. Some of that training is coming. I've got a—as an example, I've got a weak ESL teacher who needs a lot of help. They're (instructional leadership teams) working with me hand in hand they've put a lot of time. I've got a lot of new math teachers, so they're working with me. They come and do what it is they're doing. They're actually letting the teachers do some evaluations of him—I mean, observations of him. So they're working with us, and they really do work really well. (INT: P2: 8)

The principal stated that he also used the observation data collected by the school district's instructional teams. He described those actions the following way: “most definitely. Because they submit that information for us. And that's not—I guess what I'm trying to say is, when you look at the staff development you really don't consider that as part of it, but it is—.” (INT: P2: 9)

The principal felt very strongly that one of the most important attributes of the PDAS system that is part of the success of his instructional leadership is the use of walk-through observations specifically to monitor instruction. He explained that every teacher needs to be monitored and held accountable for their performance. He commented:

Yes, because you know and I know that all of us need to be monitored. You need to have an instrument to say this is where you're at. There's no—I don't think the PDAS is the best tool there is, but, yet, I can't come up—I'm not going to tell you I've got a better way of doing it. (INT: P2: 11)

Additionally, the principal stated that although he recognizes that the PDAS system has some limitations, he still felt that it was a good system that forces evaluators to visit classrooms consistently. In turn, these visits reveal a teacher's true performance in the classroom:

PDAS forces us to be in the classroom and actually puts the teachers through that situation. That's where the walk-throughs are the difference. The walk-throughs are the real show. But there's ways—the PDAS system is good enough now that you can maneuver around it. In other words, you know this is a dog-and-pony show. But when I was coming in here all these other times this was happening. So it gives us an opportunity to provide the growth that you needed. (INT: P2: 12)

Supporting New Teachers and Teachers in Need of Assistance

The data revealed that the middle school principal utilized the PDAS to identify teachers experiencing difficulties who were either new to the profession or well-experienced in the classroom. To accomplish this, the principal extended the data gathered from the walk-throughs and used it to help new teachers and experienced teachers alike to perform more effectively in the classroom and to impact instruction.

He stated that the PDAS is a very useful tool for providing assistance to all teachers, but it is extremely beneficial to teachers who need the extra help. The principal stated that when the campus administration knows that a particular teacher is experiencing difficulty in the classroom, the evaluators will make effective use out of the walk-through component of the PDAS and identify areas of weakness and develop a

plan to help teachers. He stated: “If I’ve got a weak teacher—if I’ve got a new teacher there will be more walk-throughs and it will show a lot more in the PDAS presentation.”

(INT: P2: 4)

The principal also stated that once evaluators have a thorough understanding of the specific needs of a particular teacher, the administration uses the data to help the teacher grow. He stated that the administrative team on the campus plans collaboratively to determine the better staff development and training opportunities for those teachers who are experiencing problems in teaching.

Additionally, he stated that the campus evaluators also use these data to make budgetary decisions about providing assistance to teachers. He continued explaining that the process of identifying needs for campus teachers is a difficult balancing act between two forces—the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Test and the individual needs of the teachers on the campus. He explained:

Honestly, it’s a combination. Yes—especially when you have a weak teacher. Because you know that your PDAS is going to show, you know, use of growth came out of it. So, yes, it’s a driving force. We do our budget in the spring. We’re talking about, you know, how we’re going to use Region I, how we’re going to do the teacher trainings. And it all pretty much revolved around, you know, where we’re going to—where are the deficiencies, what are we going to do for this year. And then you brought in the PDAS—physically bring. We spoke about the teachers that we knew were deficient in certain areas. Okay. We have to make sure to get so-and-so some additional training because she needs it. In English and, you know, we need to prepare them—she’s a sixth-grade teacher but she’s got to prepare for the seventh grade and we’re not—and she’s not where we want her to be. So—but PDAS’s did get from that perspective. (INT: P2: 5-6)

Mr. Storm also explained that in his experience the area of deficiency in a teacher’s classroom teaching performance that appears most often on the PDAS is

classroom management. As a result, he stated that the administration at the school provides staff development and training for teachers in this area. He explained:

Exactly. That's the most common from the PDAS and that's not good, you know, coming from that perspective. It should be more instructional. But the thing that will show the most in the PDAS evaluation is a poor discipline management. So we plan for them and we do—a lot of the discipline comes through the PDAS, if not all of it. (INT: P2: 7)

Planning For Staff Development and Training

Data revealed that the middle school principal had a strong focus on improving instruction by providing staff development and training opportunities for teachers. To this end, middle school principals used both student performance data and teacher evaluation data to identify the staff development needs of the campus. Furthermore, the data also revealed that the middle school principal viewed staff development as an effective strategy to improve instruction on the campus.

According to the principal of Pilot Knob Middle School, planning to provide staff development and training opportunities for teachers is another important component of his instructional leadership. The principal stated that he met with his administrative staff, mainly two assistant principals and himself, and planned collaboratively at the beginning of the year to develop a campus staff development calendar.

This calendar, he stated, is driven mainly by two major forces—the TAKS and the performance needs of the teachers on the campus. He did state, however, that it is often difficult to compete against the state student performance pressures. Nevertheless,

he stated, he and the other campus administrators did respond to the individual needs of the teachers and provided them the training that they needed. He described the administrative team's efforts the following way:

Honestly, it's a combination. Yes—especially when you have a weak teacher. Because you know that your PDAS is going to show, you know, use of growth came out of it. So, yes, it's a driving force. But the major force for the staff development is the school—your TAKS scores, you know—where the deficiencies are and the areas that you need to address. (INT: P2: 5)

The principal also stated that as part of the campus staff development calendar planning and development process two instructional teams in the district helped him provide some of the staff development and training that was needed. He stated:

Some of that training is coming. I've got a—as an example, I've got a weak ESL teacher who needs a lot of help. They're (instructional leadership teams) working with me hand in hand and they've put a lot of time. I've got a lot of new math teachers, so they're working with me. They come and do what it is they're doing. They're actually letting the teachers do some evaluations of him—I mean, observations of him. So they're working with us, and they really do work really well. (INT: P2: 7-8)

The principal explained that the use of the PDAS to determine the campus staff development needs helped him to decide which type of presenters to use whether internal or external presenters. He stated:

The staff development part—as you know—you know, what you said in the training—so I could have documentation and, you know, and go into what's someone's training or that we brought him down from the district. What you send to Region I, you know, management—classroom management—that kind of thing, you know. (INT: P2: 9-10)

Planning for Instruction and Setting Goals

Data also revealed that the middle school principal worked very closely with the evaluation system to plan for the instructional programs to be offered the following school year. Furthermore, the study also revealed that the principal used the information gathered through teacher evaluations to meet and set instructional goals and targets at the end of the school year. He stated, “most definitely. So, yes, when we get it all together at the end of the year—when we put that campus development plan together it actually does fall into it.” (INT: P2: 10-11)

Mr. Storm stated that the PDAS also assists him when making instructional decisions. Specifically, he stated, the PDAS has been very useful to him when he makes courses and instructional classroom assignments at the beginning of the year. The data that the PDAS reveals about a teacher’s performance including his or her attitude in the classroom with the students is very useful when making these types of decisions. He described the lengthy process and the type of dialogue that he has with such teachers as a result of the information that the PDAS yields in the following manner:

Also, you’ve got—you know, you’ve got teachers that are sarcastic. Okay? And you know that a sarcastic teacher and a GT student is a volatile combination. So you kind of try to work around that when you’re making plans and be honest with them. I say, look, this is why you don’t have GTs and your neighbor does. Now, I’m not going to say you’re sarcastic, but you have to understand that this is going to develop into more problems. Right? So in this situation to where you know there’s some weaknesses you talk about it. At the end of the year what I do is I sit down with everybody the last day and I tell them. This is my plan for next year. This is what I’d like to do next year. (INT: P2: 21-22)

Using PDAS as a Summative Tool

Data revealed that the middle school principal used the PDAS as a tool for making contractual decisions regarding the renewal, non-renewal, and termination of a teacher's contract. At the end of the year, middle school campus administrators reviewed evaluation data regarding an employee's teaching performance and then made a recommendation to the department of human resources regarding the employment future of that employee with the district.

A final key feature of the PDAS that the principal mentioned, as a part of his instructional leadership on the campus was the summative function of the PDAS. The principal stated that this function of the PDAS allows him to create a fairly solid picture of a teacher's true teaching ability. This feature of the PDAS, the principal stated, also allows him to consider multiple factors that are built into a teacher's evaluation making the system a truly comprehensive evaluation process. He stated that when it is all said and done at the end of the year, he can then make teaching assignment as well as contractual decisions about a teacher's future with the campus based upon the evaluation data that he and the other administrators have gathered over the course of one year. He described this feature of the PDAS as a holistic approach to evaluation:

...So I like a more holistic approach, if you will, where, okay, I look at the math before. We're doing a—the material is wrong, we're just not doing something right, you know, like discipline. Like those are the easy things. The teaching part is the hard thing to do. Throughout the year you're going to be doing your walk-throughs. When you put them all together, you get a pretty good picture of what's going on. (INT: P2: 17-18)

Essentially, the principal of Pilot Knob Middle School characterized the PDAS as a significant component of his instructional leadership actions at the school. Seven major features of the system emerged that he used to help him impact the instructional program on the campus. These features translated into leadership actions of the principal. He described these features as: (a) setting clear expectations, (b) adopting a multi-year evaluation process, (c) monitoring instruction and conducting walk-throughs, (d) supporting novice teachers and teachers in need of assistance, (e) planning for staff development and training, (f) planning for instruction and setting goals, and (g) using the PDAS as a summative tool.

Summary

At Pilot Knob Middle School, the data revealed that the campus administrators used the teacher evaluation system in a variety of ways to improve instruction at the school. According to the data, administrators used the system to set clear expectations, adopt a multi-year teacher evaluation system, monitor instruction by conducting walk-throughs, support novice teachers and teachers in need of assistance, plan for staff development and training, plan for instruction and set goals, and use the PDAS as a summative tool.

The data further suggested that the administration perceived the system to be a useful tool for impacting instruction at a campus where the turnover rate for teachers was low and the experience level was high. The data further suggested that the

administrators perceived the PDAS as a good system for further developing the skills of well-experienced teachers at the school.

School C

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of elementary, middle, and high school principals regarding how they use the performance appraisal of teachers as a basis for improving instruction in successful schools in Texas?

At School C, the high school assistant principal in-charge of instruction was interviewed. Mr. Macias displayed satisfaction regarding the use of the PDAS as an effective tool for improving instruction. Seven themes of the PDAS system emerged that he felt are central to his instructional leadership actions on the campus and that both impact instruction directly and indirectly. The instructional improvement features of the system that were identified were: (a) setting clear expectations, (b) monitoring instruction by conducting walk-throughs, (c) using PDAS as a summative tool, (d) providing staff development and training, (e) implementing the instructional strategies, (f) providing support to teachers in need of assistance, and (g) using the PDAS as a formative tool.

Setting Clear Expectations

Data revealed that the high school assistant principal set clear expectations at the beginning of the school year regarding the annual appraisal activities on the campus. To this end, the assistant principal met with all teachers, informed them of updates, trained

new teachers to the campus, and provided a review of the evaluation system as a means to clarify expectations and to impact instruction positively.

Mr. Macias began by explaining the tone that the campus principal sets at the beginning of every school year regarding teacher evaluation on the campus. He perceived these actions as central and pivotal to the principal's instructional leadership on the campus. Mr. Macias stated that at the beginning of every school year, the principal engages the entire campus faculty and staff in meetings to present an overview of the evaluation process and to update them on any district or state changes regarding this system.

In addition, Mr. Macias explained, the principal first meets with the campus administrators in order to give each of them their teacher evaluation assignments. He stated that the principal demonstrates every school year through her actions the importance of setting clear goals and expectations regarding their responsibilities in the teacher evaluation process. He explained:

Well, we, of course, help to implement the PDAS. We divide it on campus, of course, between—we get an area—we get our assigned teachers who we will work with. However, we try—we do overlap in between areas. The way we try to enforce—or work about it is that whenever we do an observation that's outside of our assigned teacher then we will go ahead and assign it. We will provide that documentation to the person that is assigned to—that individual. (INT: AP3: 2-3)

Mr. Macias further explained the method of assignment regarding the teachers who each administrator will evaluate as well as the number of teachers that each administrator on the campus evaluates as the following:

I can tell you—about 30 roughly. The way we do it here is that we go by department. So like I have math department and I have fine arts. Actually, it might be a little bit under 30—about 20. The principal will evaluate the department heads. And that’s usually who she will work with—the department chairs. (INT: AP3: 3)

He further stated that the presentations at the beginning of the year are essentially conducted by the campus administration only after checking with the district’s human resources office to ensure that they are complying with the law. He stated: “we would do it through ours and then through human resources just to make sure that we’re complying with what we are supposed to. Yes, administration. Yes.” (INT: AP3: 4)

He described the annual evaluative procedures expected of each administrator by the campus principal as one of his instructional leadership expectations. He explained that each campus assistant principal is expected to meet with his or her instructional department to go over the evaluation expectations and to inform all faculty members of what is expected with regard to evaluation. He stated:

We provide the training at the beginning of the year as far as what we’re going to be doing. And that begins at the beginning of the year to all staff. Those that are new to the campus, the district provides them with a little bit more detail as far as what they will be graded on and how they will be rated according to that. Then, from there, what we do is that we—let’s see, we do provide the—at the beginning as departments or by—like, personally, I will meet with the department that I’m assigned to and I will also look-tell them what I will be doing during the year and how we go about it. (INT: AP3: 4-5)

Monitoring Instruction by Conducting Walk-Throughs

Data revealed that the high school assistant principal used the PDAS as a means to monitor and impact instruction. The main focus of administrators at the high school campus was on strengthening the instructional program at the campus. To meet this

goal, administrators conducted periodic but consistent unannounced classroom visits to ensure that effective teaching and learning was taking place. These visits consisted of five teacher visits for no more than five minutes per visit.

As a means of monitoring instruction, the campus administration used the walk-through function of the system as a comprehensive means of both monitoring instruction and arriving at a true picture of a teacher's classroom performance. Mr. Macias described the campus administration's actions at the beginning of the school year as follows:

We do informal walk-throughs where we provide feedback to the teachers if there's any areas of concern. And then when we come back to PDAS itself to the observation—the formal observation. The—of course, it's the Part I and Part II, the classroom observation and then we have the summative. When we do the classroom observation we try to schedule in—a window when we will walk into the classroom and do that formally. And then for the summative we usually do those towards the end of the year. And any documentation that we gather there, good or bad, will go into that instrument. (INT: AP3: 5).

Additionally, Mr. Macias's perception regarding the school's proven record of success centered upon his belief that it is important for campus administrators to monitor instruction. Mr. Macias stated that while no formal policy requirement exists to instruct administrators to conduct a certain number of walk-throughs, he felt that the more administrators monitor instruction through this function, the higher the success rate of the school. In fact, he stated that the reason that Mustang Ridge High School had a proven record of high student achievement was because one of the principal's leadership actions on the campus consisted of the requirement that the campus administrators conduct walk-throughs in teachers' classrooms. He stated:

If they (law-makers) were to mandate that we do it more often it would help a little bit more. Personally, I try not to. I try not to. I mean, I try and visit as—a little bit more to do the informals. Oh, the—what I think is one weakness is that we don't—we're not required to go in more than once. So we try. And I think that's one of the things that we are—one of the reasons why we are successful as a campus because we do make it a point to go in a little bit more often than once a year. (INT: AP3: 16)

Mr. Macias explained that despite the subjective nature of the PDAS, the way that the administration arrived at a more valid conclusion regarding a teacher's classroom performance is through the use of data collected by conducting walk-throughs. According to Mr. Macias, this requirement was one of the campus principal's instructional leadership actions. He commented:

And that is subjective. It is. I mean, you basically sit there and say, well, what is it that this teacher has done that exceeds that—that allows them to get that. That's why personally—and I think here as a campus we do it as a whole—I mean, I don't think I'm the only one—we try and do the walk-throughs to find out exactly what's going on on a daily basis. Because, other than that, if you're walking in for a 45-minute snapshot it's really not going to—you know. And, yet, then it falls back to saying, well, you know, what is it that you didn't see. (INT: AP3: 18)

Using PDAS as a Summative Tool

According to the data, using the PDAS as a summative tool emerged as one of the actions that administrators used to positively impact instruction at the campus. To meet this goal, administrators utilized the data gathered from teacher evaluations to decide whether to allow a teacher to continue their work at the campus or to end their employment at the campus. The data indicated that the administrators had exercised their discretion in this regard in the past as an effective means of impacting instruction.

Another key component of the principal's instructional leadership actions on the campus consisted of the use of the PDAS as a summative tool to make and arrive at contractual decisions regarding a teacher's future on the campus and with the school district. According to Mr. Macias, the campus administration under the direction of the principal, views the summative function of PDAS as a critical component of leading and managing a successful campus. When asked, the assistant principal stated that the administration had used the PDAS as a tool, in the recent past, to inform a teacher about their poor classroom teaching performance. He described that recent incident as the following:

Oh, yes. Yes. Oh, yes. We had—I had one (a teacher) that I dealt with last year who—that we could see that he was not adjusting to the classroom. So, yes, we do—in that case, then that is where we gather our documentation to make sure that everything's in order. (INT: AP3: 6)

When asked if that teacher was allowed to continue teaching on the campus, Mr. Macias stated:

No. That person had already decided that he was going to move on and that this is not for him. So they—before we actually went into it any further, as far as generating their growth plans or anything, or what we call “Teacher In Need of Assistance.” Before we generated any of that that person had already decided that they were going to move on. So, yes, it did help in that sense because it gives you an avenue to say, well, this is what we need to address for next year. (INT: AP3: 6)

Mr. Macias described the campus administration's typical summative actions at the end of the year with teachers. According to Mr. Macias, the administration considers all data gathered throughout the year regarding a teacher's appraisal and then uses that data comprehensively to not only evaluate a teacher's performance throughout the year,

but also to decide their future with the school and the district. He described those leadership actions as the following:

During the year when we have teachers that we feel are not performing the way they should then this is where we—and, again, we build up our documentation as far as saying, well, these are informal walk-throughs, this is what we're saying, this is what you need to correct. And, yes, it will culminate at the end of the year with their appraisal to—so, yes. Anything that we find during the year we will sum it up at the end of the year, unless, of course, there's a great need there, at which point we would speed that up. (INT: AP3: 11-12)

Providing Staff Development and Training

Data revealed that a strong relationship between the PDAS and the staff development activities at the high school campus served to strengthen student academic performance. The administrators on the campus surveyed the teachers through the Teacher Self-Report (TSR), planned for workshops, and provided the training throughout the year as a means of improving instruction at the campus.

Another key component of the campus principal's instructional leadership was providing staff development and training opportunities for teachers as a result of their annual appraisals. Mr. Macias explained that at Mustang Ridge High School the campus administration led by the principal planned for the staff development and training events for the following year. He stated that the staff development and training calendar is essentially driven by two major forces which are somewhat similar as well as different from the other schools.

At this school, Mr. Macias explained, the two driving forces are staff development requests by the teachers in their Teacher Self-Report and administrator

identified needs based upon walk-through observations which are still tied to the comprehensive evaluation system. Mr. Macias stated:

Well, we can do it based on two needs. If it's a teacher in need of assistance, we look at what they give us in their self-report. And sometimes they're asking us. Now, if it's—if we're seeing that—if the teacher's requesting it then we make an effort to try and provide them with that training. I mean—and, again, sometimes we're limited by funds. Oh, no, no. On their self-report there's an area where it says, describe any future training. And that's where we look at that and see, well, if we can accommodate you, yes, we will. That's—the summative—it's in the second part—the Part II of the appraisal process. (INT: AP3: 7-8)

Mr. Macias further explained that once the campus administration team identified the campus's staff development and training needs at the end of the year either the campus administration conducts the trainings or they enlist the services of two district instructional teams to provide the activities. He stated:

Yes. It varies. Sometimes as a team—which usually it's them (referring to the district's instructional teams). They provide a lot of the training. Sometimes it comes from the department of instruction, which is the assistant superintendent. It depends what the need is. (INT: AP3: 10)

Mr. Macias explained that the school district has two instructional teams who essentially provide all of the staff development and training needs for all of the schools in the district. Since the district has about 33 campuses, the district is divided into two sectors and each team serves approximately 15 campuses each. Mr. Macias explained that these teams were created approximately eight years ago by a superintendent who was very innovative. At that time, the district had three instructional teams. However, budget constraints led to the dissolving of one team.

Implementing the Instructional Strategies

Data revealed that the participating assistant principal used the teacher evaluation system to help implement the instructional program on the campus. The main focus of these efforts was to identify the instructional needs of the campus. Further, because the campus operated a Gifted and Talented Program, the administrators had a strong focus on ensuring high instructional delivery methods that focused upon higher order thinking skills and critical thinking skills. To this end, principals used the teacher evaluation system to ensure the implementation of these teaching strategies.

Another instructional leadership action of the principal, regarding the use of the PDAS as a tool for improving instruction at Mustang Ridge High School, was the use of the PDAS process to implement and integrate part of the instructional program of the school. According to Mr. Macias, because the high school is the receiver of students in the district's Gifted and Talented program, the principal ensures that teachers are using the proper instructional strategies with students in this program. Additionally, he stated the principal also used the PDAS to ensure that all teachers in the campus used instructional strategies effectively with all student populations. Mr. Macias explained that the PDAS was an effective tool and a comprehensive process to help implement this part of the instructional program put forth by the campus principal. He explained:

It can be instructional. We do either GT training, we do—or instructional strategies. We do specific, which would be you're A.P. training. And those we don't provide. Those are outside. And then if it is something else having to do like, for example, discipline or discipline management, then we—normally those we also do, and those are taken care of by the district as far as how we go about doing it. (INT: AP3: 10)

Providing Support to Teachers in Need of Assistance

Data revealed that administrators at the high school provided assistance to teachers experiencing difficulties based upon the PDAS as an action to influence student achievement on the campus. Administrators identified teachers who needed support through classroom observations and teachers requesting help. In response to these data, principals sent teachers to trainings, implemented growth plans, and provided campus opportunities for growth as a mechanism for impacting teaching and learning on the campus.

The assistant principal reported that the campus administration provided help to teachers who experienced difficulty in teaching and also to teachers who were either new or inexperienced teachers or experienced teachers who were simply having difficulty in the classroom. According to Mr. Macias, he perceived this function as an important part of his instructional leadership actions on the campus.

Mr. Macias stated that the administration identified these teachers through walk-through observations or other means and the administration planned accordingly. He stated that they put together growth plans or other instructional plans to try and help teachers who are experiencing difficulty in the classroom. In this case, he stated, they use the PDAS as a formative tool. He stated:

Now, we designate people that—I mean, if that person is in need of assistance, then we will provide—we come up with a plan to provide specific trainings that we would like to—that teacher address. Usually it's at the end of the year—towards the end of the year when we do the final summary. Like, in that case of that teacher that we had, we were already preparing a plan for him to address certain areas. (INT: AP3: 8-9)

On the other hand, Mr. Macias explained that occasionally, the campus administration deals with more time sensitive situations regarding teachers' appraisals. For example, he stated that occasionally a campus administrator may find himself or herself responsible for evaluating a teacher who is experiencing serious problems teaching and managing their classroom. At this point, he explained, the evaluator speeds up the formative process in an effort to both help the teacher and ensure that the students are being served correctly. In these cases, he stated:

Now, during the year, if we have a teacher—or we try and—normally what we'll do to help the teacher, as far as trainings or anything to help them out in the classroom, as far as instruction, the district is—we try and target people to provide them with—whether it be subject content area training or whether it be something else, whether it be discipline or anything else in their classroom—we do provide the trainings for them. And in those sometimes we are allowed to generate a whole group—say, by department—or we go by need, you know. So if we see that a teacher needs an area and certain things that. (INT: AP3: 9)

Using the PDAS as a Formative Tool

Data revealed that administrators at the high school used the PDAS as a formative tool. The administration described this feature of the system as a safety net to use to help all teachers improve upon their teaching practices. Administrators planned and provided opportunities for growth as well as to help the administrators identify specific areas of concern to impact the instructional program on the campus.

Mr. Macias explained that the PDAS helped the administration put together a solid plan of action for helping teachers rather than the administration coming up with a general plan that may or may not help. In addition, Mr. Macias also explained the safety net function of the PDAS as follows:

Yes, it is because I think that we do—it does provide—it's their safety net. It does provide for training if there's areas of concern. And, yes, it does give us a tool by which we can come back and systematically say, this is what we're going to do for you. Rather than to be general, it's we'd like to see this. (INT: AP3: 11)

In addition to the above-mentioned function of the PDAS, Mr. Macias explained that the campus principal and the administration have discussed in detail the formative and summative functions of the PDAS. According to Mr. Macias, the principal sees this two part process as a central function of her instructional leadership on the campus. According to Mr. Macias, the two components of the PDAS are effective tools for helping campus administrators help teachers to be successful. It also gives them a tool by which the campus administration can ensure a safe and orderly campus by ensuring that all of the campus and district policies and procedures are being followed. In turn, this ensures a healthy instructional environment where students feel safe and where they can learn. He explained:

The—what I like about the PDAS is that there's two areas that it addresses, which is your classroom instruction—your formal observation in the classroom and where we look at the teacher—and that's a snapshot, of course. And then you have the second tool, which is your policies and procedures. So they do tie in together, of course. (INT: AP3: 13-14)

Essentially, Mr. Macias explained that the general perception within the campus administration is that the PDAS is a good and helpful formative tool. He stated that the teacher developmental process is an important leadership action of the principal on the campus and that the PDAS as a tool helps her achieve this goal. Whether the PDAS is used during a time of crisis when a teacher is exhibiting serious problems teaching his or

her class or if it is simply a decision that needs to be made regarding what staff development and training to provide, the PDAS is:

No, I think it is because—I mean, we have a very—we are fortunate. We have a very good staff—a very experienced staff. But, as far as the PDAS as a tool itself, yes, it does help us because, again, it helps us to weed out any problem that we perceive during the year. So, yes, it goes one year in advance, you know. We're able to help those teachers that are not performing, but the tool does help us whenever we find a weakness as far as somebody with instruction. (INT: AP3: 12-13)

Summary

The data collected revealed that successful instructional leaders, principals and assistant principals, use the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS) in a variety of ways as a mechanism for improving instruction at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. In addition, an analysis of the data revealed several emerging themes. These included: (a) setting clear expectations, (b) monitoring instruction by conducting walk-throughs, (c) adopting a multi-year evaluation process, (d) connecting staff development and training to the PDAS, (e) supporting new teachers and teachers in need of assistance, (f) using the PDAS as a summative and formative tool, and (g) planning for instruction and setting goals.

A complete list of the emerging themes as revealed by the data is presented below in Table 5.1 Emerging Themes. The commonalities and differences across sites are presented in the next section.

Table 5.1 Emerging Themes

Instructional Improvement		
<u>Elementary</u>	<u>Middle</u>	<u>High</u>
Setting Clear Expectations	Setting Clear Expectations	Setting Clear Expectations
Monitoring and Supervising Instruction	Adopting a Multi-year Evaluation Process	Monitoring Instruction
Viewing PDAS as a Process Rather Than an Instrument	Monitoring Instruction Conducting Walk-Throughs	Conducting Walk-Throughs
Adopting a Multi-year Evaluation Process	Supporting New Teachers and Teachers in Need of Assistance	Using PDAS as a Summative Tool
Aligning Instructional Leadership Actions to The PDAS Domains	Planning for Staff Development and Training	Providing Staff Development and Training
Connecting Staff Development to PDAS	Planning for Instruction and Setting Goals	Implementing the Instructional Strategies
Using the PDAS to Ensure Compliance With District and Campus Policies, Procedures, and Rules	Using PDAS as a Summative Tool	Providing Support to Teachers in Need of Assistance
		Using PDAS as a Formative Tool

Cross-Site Analysis

Commonalities among the perceptions of elementary, middle, and high school principals regarding how they use the performance appraisal of teachers as a basis for improving instruction in successful schools in Texas emerged in the cross-site analysis. This section includes information regarding those commonalities and a summary table of the cross-site analysis (Table 5.1).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify elementary, middle, and high school principals' perceptions regarding their instructional leadership actions in the performance appraisal of teachers in successful schools in Texas. The focus was on

instructional leadership actions that serve to enhance efforts at improving teaching and learning through a comprehensive teacher evaluation system in Texas.

Similarities

Research Question 2: What are the similarities and differences in perceptions between elementary, middle, and high school principals regarding how they use the performance appraisal system for teachers as a basis for improving instruction in successful school in Texas?

In order to use the Professional Development and Appraisal System for teachers in Texas as part of their instructional leadership actions on each of the campuses as a basis for improving instruction, the principals used the system in similar ways across school level sites called similar themes. The similar themes that emerged from the data include: (a) monitoring instruction by conducting walk-throughs, (b) aligning instructional leadership actions to the PDAS Domains, (c) adopting a multi-year teacher evaluation process, (d) connecting the PDAS to staff development, (e) providing assistance to teachers in need of assistance, (f) using the PDAS as a summative and formative tool, (g) setting clear expectations, and (h) implementing the instructional program.

A complete view of the similar themes that emerged from the study are presented on Table 5.2 below Similar Themes.

Table 5.2 Similar Themes

Similarities		
<u>Elementary</u>	<u>Middle</u>	<u>High</u>
Setting Clear Expectations	Setting Clear Expectations	Setting Clear Expectations
Monitoring and Supervising Instruction	Adopting a Multi-year Evaluation Process	Monitoring Instruction by Conducting Walk-Throughs
Adopting a Multi-year Evaluation Process	Monitoring Instruction by Conducting Walk-Throughs	Using PDAS as a Summative and Formative Tool
Connecting Staff Development to PDAS	Supporting New Teachers and Teachers in Need of Assistance	Providing Staff Development and Training
Aligning Instructional Leadership Actions to the PDAS Domains	Planning for Staff Development and Training	Providing Assistance to Teachers in Need of Assistance
	Using PDAS as a Summative Tool	

Elementary, Middle, and High School

Setting Clear Expectations

The data revealed that principals at all three levels used the system to provide general support to the teachers. In order to ensure a safe and orderly campus, an educationally sound environment, and a school that met state and federal requirements, the principals used the system as a means of ensuring support for both teachers and students.

At the beginning of the year at each of the campuses, the principals used a formalized system for setting and sharing their expectations with regard to the evaluation system. The principals first met with the campus administrators to plan beginning of the year evaluation activities, then they met with the campus faculties to review any changes or updates, review the system in general, and to declare their expectations of their performance.

Additionally, the school district central administration also provided staff development and training sessions that complimented each of the campus's activities. In these sessions, the district administration covered in greater detail the evaluation system in order to ensure compliance with the law and also to ensure that the new teachers were given a comprehensive overview of the system.

Monitoring Instruction by Conducting Walk-Throughs

The data also revealed that all three principals required that each of the campus assistant principals conduct several walk-throughs prior to holding the 45-minute classroom observation as well as holding the final summative conference. Each of the principals cited this particular function of the system as a necessary step in the teacher evaluation process in order to arrive at a true picture of a teacher's performance in the classroom.

Connecting Staff Development to PDAS

Each of three principals tied their campus staff development calendar of activities to the PDAS. The principals used a variety of methods for identifying the campus staff development needs using the PDAS process. On the secondary campuses, the principals used the Teacher Self-Report Part II to survey the teachers regarding their requests for specific workshops and training sessions. At the end of the year at both of the secondary campuses, the campus administrators met to review the Teacher Self-Report Forms. During these sessions, the administrators created lists of those staff

development requests that each of the teachers had requested on their self-evaluation forms.

After the lists were created, the administrators then compared the teacher requests to both their perceptions of what staff development sessions were needed on the campus based both upon the teacher requests, the administrators' perceptions, and the students' performance on the state mandated exams. Once these needs were identified, the administrators would then plan to conduct the training sessions themselves or they enlisted the services of two district instructional teams that would provide the staff development meetings.

Elementary and Middle School

Adopting a Multi-year Evaluation Process

Another commonality that emerged during the research project was the elementary and middle school principals' agreement with the school district administration's decision to adopt a multi-year evaluation process in the district. The principals explained that they supported this move and would adopt it and use it as one of their instructional leadership actions because they felt that this would positively impact instruction.

They explained that under this plan, teachers who had remained at a campus for a period of at least three years and who had three consecutive years of documented demonstrated success on their PDAS evaluations could opt to be evaluated every other year. The two principals worked to create successful learning environments through the

positive school climates. This particular strategy would help them achieve the desired effect.

The two principals also showed respect and agreement that teachers who had demonstrated records of success in their evaluations should not have to be evaluated every year. Each of the principals extended successful teachers the benefit of the doubt when it came to their evaluations by allowing them flexibility in their evaluation schedules as opposed to new and inexperienced teachers. Each of the principals made it a point to visit new teachers' classrooms more often and veteran teachers' classrooms less often.

Middle and High School

Providing Assistance to Teachers in Need of Assistance

At the middle school and high school levels, principals also used the teacher evaluation system to identify new teachers who were experiencing difficulty in the classroom as well as teachers in general who were experiencing problems in teaching. The teachers were identified by using the system in order to provide them with staff development training sessions that were aimed at improving their experience in the classroom. Each of the administrators met with the campus administrators and the teachers at the beginning of the year in order to set their evaluation expectations and plan their evaluation activities. The principals planned effectively by requiring each of the assistant principals to visit classrooms early in the year so that they could be identified and provide assistance to those teachers who were having trouble in the

classroom. Essentially, the two principals recognized and utilized the formative function of the system effectively.

Using PDAS as a Summative Tool

The most common utility of the PDAS cited by the middle school and high school principals was the summative function of the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS). The two principals recognized this particular function of the teacher evaluation system, and they used it in a variety of ways. The principals recognized first and foremost that teacher evaluation systems, in general, and the PDAS, in particular, were not necessarily designed to be used solely as evaluation instruments solely for summative purposes. However, they regarded the PDAS as an effective summative tool and used it at different times in the year for summative purposes.

The principals used a formalized system at the beginning of the year to collect data from each of the teachers by visiting their classrooms. When they identified a teacher who needed assistance, they would meet with the teacher and share the evaluation information that the principals had gathered using the PDAS instrument. After sharing this information with each of the teachers, they would then develop a plan to help the teacher, and the plan would be implemented with clear expectations and deadlines set. After the plan was implemented, the evaluators would then continue to gather additional evaluation data to ensure the success of the teacher.

If the teacher was successful in meeting the expectations set forth in the teacher's professional growth plan, the teacher's contractual relationship with the school district

would be extended. If the teacher was unsuccessful in meeting the expectations of the plan, the principals would then consider the option of nonrenewing a teacher's employment contract with the school district. In several cases, the principals would not renew the teacher's contract. In other cases, the teachers who were identified in need of help and who were counseled would resign before the contract consideration period.

Essentially, the principals viewed the system equally useful as a summative and formative tool. Additionally, each of the principals expressed feelings of discomfort when faced with having to use the system to weed-out teachers who were not effective. In contrast, each of the principals expressed strong satisfaction with the PDAS's formative design. They used the Teacher Self-Report and informal and formal evaluation data in order to provide teachers with opportunities for growth and development.

Differences

Research Question 2: What are the similarities and differences in perceptions between elementary, middle, and high school principals regarding how they use the performance appraisal system for teachers as a basis for improving instruction in successful school in Texas?

In order to use the Professional Development and Appraisal System for teachers in Texas as part of their instructional leadership actions on each of the campuses as a basis for improving instruction, the principals used the system in different ways across school level sites called different themes. The different themes that emerged from the

data include: (a) viewing PDAS as a process rather than an instrument, (b) aligning instructional leadership actions to the PDAS domains, (c) planning for instruction and setting goals, (d) implementing the instructional strategies, and (e) using the PDAS as a formative tool.

A complete view of the different themes that emerged from the study are presented on Table 5.3 below Different Themes.

Table 5.3 Different Themes

Differences		
<u>Elementary</u>	<u>Middle</u>	<u>High</u>
Viewing PDAS as a Process Rather Than an Instrument	Instructional Planning and Goal Setting	Using the PDAS as a Formative Tool
Aligning Instruction Leadership Actions with PDAS Domains		Implementing the Instructional Strategies

Elementary School

Viewing PDAS as a Process Rather Than an Instrument

The data revealed that only the elementary school principal viewed the PDAS as a process rather than an instrument. According to the principal, in order to achieve instructional improvement on the campus, she and other campus administrators started out with the view that the PDAS is a year-long process that takes into account many evaluation factors. Instead of a one-time 45 minute observation per year, the principal stated that the campus administration conducts several walk-through observations

throughout the year in order to gain a true and accurate picture of a teacher's work in the classroom.

In addition to the use of multiple classroom visits, the data also revealed that the principal identified other uses of the system that she considered when completing a teacher's evaluation that she felt contributed to the success of the campus as a whole. She stated that the PDAS is a useful system that takes into account campus student performance data, yearly teacher evaluation activities, and data provided by individual teachers. These components of the system contribute to the principal's view that the PDAS was a year-long process rather than an evaluation instrument.

Aligning Instructional Leadership Actions to the PDAS Domains

The data revealed that the elementary school principal first and foremost ensured that the instructional strategies that she promoted as part of her instructional leadership on the campus were connected to the PDAS Domains. To this end, the principal communicated her instructional expectations with the teachers on the campus regarding the instructional strategies that she expected for each of the teachers to use in their respective classrooms. According to the principal, those strategies included the type of instructional arrangement that the teachers were using in the classroom, the motivational strategies that they used with the students, the curriculum that they used for their lessons, and their reinforcement of that curriculum.

According to the data, the principal viewed the importance of connecting a campus principal's instructional leadership strategies to a teacher evaluation system as a

means of measuring a teacher's compliance with the leader's expectations in order to impact the instruction on the campus.

Middle School

Planning for Instruction and Setting Goals

According to the data, the middle school principal used the teacher evaluation data gathered by the PDAS to plan the instructional activities for the campus and to set instructional goals. The data revealed that the campus principal in conjunction with the other campus administrators met at the end of the school year to dialogue about the instructional activities for the campus for the following year. In addition, the data also revealed that the administrators used the data gathered from teacher evaluation activities to discuss, negotiate, and arrive at a revised Campus Improvement Plan (CIP) each year.

The data also revealed that the campus principal used the teacher evaluation data in other ways to impact instruction on the campus. For example, the data revealed that the campus principal used individual teacher's evaluations to determine their classroom assignments for the following school year. He used the data to make course offering determinations for the following school year.

High School

Implementing the Instructional Strategies

Data revealed that the campus administration at the high school level used the teacher evaluation system to ensure the implementation of specific instructional strategies on the campus. For example, the data revealed that because the high school was home to the district's Gifted and Talented (GT) Program, the administrators on the campus had the responsibility to ensure that GT instructional strategies were being used by the teachers in those courses.

To this end, the campus administrators used the evaluation system to ensure that a high level of instructional delivery was taking place at all levels but especially in this instructional area. The assistant principal revealed that the administration used the system to evaluate a teacher's use of higher order thinking skills, critical thinking skills, and GT strategies. The assistant principal on this campus felt very positively that the PDAS was a good system for measuring and monitoring this type of instruction.

Using the PDAS as a Formative Tool

Data revealed that at the high school level, the administration of the school used the evaluation system as a formative tool. According to the assistant principal, the campus administration used the system to identify, early on in the year, those teachers who were experiencing difficulty in the classroom. As a result of the data gathered from those initial classroom visits, the administration would develop growth plans for

individual teachers with the input of those teachers. Subsequently, the growth plan would then be implemented with specific timelines for completion.

Data also revealed that the campus administration acknowledged the two dimensions of the PDAS and used them accordingly. According to the assistant principal, the reason for the administration's use of the formative aspect of the system was because the campus administration regarded it as a powerful function of the system to use. Further, the data revealed that the administrators used this dimension of the system to make contractual teaching decisions at the end of the school year.

CHAPTER SIX

Summary, Findings, Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

Summary of Study and Procedures

Study

The purpose of this study was to identify elementary, middle, and high school principals' perceptions regarding their instructional leadership actions in the performance appraisal of teachers in successful schools in Texas. The focus was on instructional leadership actions that serve to enhance efforts at improving teaching and learning through a comprehensive teacher evaluation system in Texas.

Policy-makers, state education officials, researchers, and educators have recognized the need to implement state and national accountability systems aimed at improving teaching and learning in today's public schools. One of the systems that the above mentioned public school education stakeholders have recognized as critical is comprehensive teacher evaluation systems. While the public school leaders have conceived of comprehensive teacher evaluation systems as mechanisms to improve teaching and learning, research suggests that little is known about leaders' perceptions regarding comprehensive teacher evaluation systems and how they use the performance appraisal of teachers as a basis for improving instruction in successful schools in Texas (Darling-Hammond, Wise and Pease, 1983). Further, principals voices at all levels have not been part of the dialogues to create, implement, and use sound teacher evaluation

systems as a basis for improving teaching and learning. Hence, research that focuses upon the perceptions of elementary, middle, and high school principals regarding their actions within the performance appraisal of teachers is needed (Painter, 2001). Such research would illuminate instructional leadership of principals' efforts to enhance teaching and learning through comprehensive teacher evaluation systems.

The following questions guided the research study:

1. What are the perceptions of elementary, middle, and high school principals regarding how they use the performance appraisal of teachers as a basis for improving instruction in successful schools in Texas?
2. What are the similarities and difference in perceptions between elementary, middle, and high school principals regarding how they use the performance appraisal system for teachers as a basis for improving instruction in successful schools in Texas?

Procedures

The researcher used a multiple case study design and included a cross-site analysis to investigate the elementary, middle, and high school principals' perceptions regarding their actions and behaviors in the performance appraisal system for teachers in successful schools in Texas. Researchers affirm that future studies need to provide a description of the actions of principals in the performance appraisal for teachers. Therefore, a case study design was considered to be appropriate. Research using

qualitative case studies can be a powerful method to determine individualized outcomes such as principal's behaviors and actions (Patton, 1990). Further, Patton (1990) writes,

case studies become particularly useful where one needs to understand some special people, particular problem, or unique situation in great depth, and where one can identify cases rich in information—rich in the sense that a great deal can be learned from a few exemplars of the phenomenon in question. (p. 54)

Cases can include: (a) persons, (b) events, (c) programs, (d) organizations, (e) time periods, (f) critical incidents, or (g) communities (Patton, 1990). For the purposes of this study, the case study unit of analysis will be principals in selected successful schools in Texas.

This study incorporated five characteristics of qualitative research outlined by Bogdan and Biklen (1982):

1. Qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument (p. 27).
2. Qualitative research is descriptive (p. 28).
3. Qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products (p. 28).
4. Qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively (p. 29).
5. "Meaning" is of essential concern to the qualitative approach (p. 29).

Additionally, Yin (2003) cites one major purpose followed by several advantages and logic for using a multiple case study design within the overall scope of inquiry. According to Yin (2003) the most compelling reason for using a multiple case study design is for replication, not sampling logic. Further, he

states, “the logic underlying the use of multiple-case studies is the same. Each case must be carefully selected so that it either (a) predicts similar results (a literal replication) or (b) predicts contrasting results but for predictable reasons (a theoretical replication)” (Yin, 2003; p. 47). Consequently, for the purposes of this study one elementary principal, one middle school principal, two middle school assistant principals, and one high school principal were selected.

Finally, Herriott and Firestone (1983) advance that the evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust.

Findings

The research study on the perceptions of elementary, middle, and high school principals regarding how they use the performance appraisal of teachers as a basis for improving instruction in successful schools in Texas generated the following findings:

Elementary School

- 1) To improve instruction at the elementary school level, one principal used the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS) to monitor instruction through walk-through observations, viewed the PDAS as a process rather than an instrument, and adopted a district

initiative to conduct multi-year teacher evaluations for those tenured teachers who had a documented record of success on the PDAS.

- 2) Data revealed that to improve instruction at the elementary school level, one principal used the PDAS to ensure that the instructional leadership actions promoted by the principal were consistent with each of the PDAS domains and connected the campus staff development activities to the PDAS.
- 3) According to the findings, to improve instruction at the elementary school level, one principal used the PDAS to ensure that all teachers complied with the policies, procedures, and rules of the district and campus in order to provide a safe, comfortable, and successful learning environment for all students, and they set clear expectations regarding the campus evaluation procedures at the beginning of each school year.

Middle School

- 4) Findings of the study revealed that to improve instruction at the middle school level, one principal and two assistant principals used the PDAS to adopt a district administrations' initiative to implement a multi-year teacher evaluation process for successful teachers who had demonstrated success in their teaching performance through the PDAS.

- 5) Findings of the study also revealed that to improve instruction at the middle school level, one principal and two assistant principals used the PDAS as a tool to provide support for new teachers and for Teachers in Need of Assistance, to conduct staff development and training planning sessions as an administrative staff, and to conduct campus administrative meetings to plan instructionally and set goals for the entire campus regarding student academic achievement.
- 6) To improve instruction at the middle school level, one principal and two assistant principals used the PDAS as a summative tool to make critical contractual decisions during the contract renewal and non-renewal period required by the state, and to set clear expectations at the beginning of the school year regarding the annual campus teacher appraisal activities.

High School

- 7) Data revealed that to improve instruction at the high school level, one assistant principal used the PDAS to monitor the instructional program of the school, as a summative tool to make contractual decisions, to set the campus staff development and training calendar, and to ensure the implementation of the school's instructional program.

- 8) According to the findings of the study, to improve instruction at the high school level, one assistant principal used the PDAS to provide assistance to Teachers in Need of Assistance, as a formative tool to help develop a teacher's performance in the classroom, and to set clear expectations at the beginning of the school year regarding the campus teacher evaluation activities for the year.

Elementary, Middle, and High School

- 9) Furthermore, findings across study sites revealed that to improve instruction at all three school levels, principals and assistant principals used the PDAS to monitor instruction by conducting walk-through observations consistently, adopting a district initiative that would make the teacher evaluation process a multi-year system for successful teachers, and to set clear expectations regarding the teacher evaluation activities at the beginning of the school year.

Middle School and High School

- 10) To improve instruction at the middle and high school levels, the principals used the PDAS as a summative tool to make binding contractual decisions at the end of each school year.

Similar findings across research sites (elementary, middle, and high school) revealed that the principals and assistant principals used the performance appraisal of teachers as a basis for improving instruction by conducting walk-through observations that allowed them to monitor the instructional program, adopt a multi-year teacher evaluation process for successful teachers to improve the campus climate, and by setting clear expectations regarding the teacher evaluation activities on the campus at the beginning of the year. The principals also used the PDAS to provide support for new teachers as well as for teachers experiencing difficulty in the classroom, connecting the campus staff development and training activities to the teacher evaluation system results, and by using the PDAS both as a summative and formative tool. Additionally, the principals used the comprehensive teacher evaluation system for instructional planning, for implementation of the campus instructional program, and to ensure that they provided a safe and orderly learning environment by ensuring that all teachers complied with policies, procedures, and rules of the district and each of the campuses. The findings of this study led to several conclusions regarding the instructional leadership of high school principals.

Gifted and Talented (GT) Programs and High Socioeconomic Student (SES) Levels

The three schools selected for the study served as the base and feeder pattern for the district's Gifted and Talented (GT) Magnet Program. As such, the three schools served an elite student population that participated in the school's accountability testing. As a result, the school's accountability rating which is based on student performance is

impacted by the scores of students with high levels of academic achievement. It is important for the reader to keep in mind that it is quite possible for the success of the school to be attributed to this factor rather than to the principals' actions in the teacher evaluation system.

In addition to students' academic backgrounds at all three schools, it is also important to note that because of the geographical location of the schools, the students served come from middle class and upper middle class families with high financial means. It is also possible that the success of each of the schools can be a function of this factor rather than the administration's actions in teacher evaluation efforts.

Conclusions

The conclusions of this study are drawn from the constructs of the research questions, namely how principals at the elementary, middle, and high school levels use the performance appraisal system for teachers as a basis for improving instruction in successful schools in Texas. Each conclusion is supported by an elaboration of the findings.

Monitoring Instruction

The principal's leadership actions in using comprehensive teacher evaluation systems play a significant role in strengthening student academic achievement in successful schools. The findings of the present study support Zimmerman and Deckert-Pelton's (2003) assertion that, "many stakeholders and educational researchers would

also agree that principals are key players in the success of an effective teacher evaluation, and any subsequent teacher improvement and increased student achievement” (p. 28). As a result, it is imperative that principals monitor the instructional program by consistently conducting walk-through observations of teachers’ classroom performance. Central to this process is that campus administrators view the PDAS as a process rather than a 45-minute evaluation instrument. Moreover, ensuring that the PDAS is viewed and used as a process, campus leaders can create a picture of a teacher’s performance over time to both help develop teaching capacity and to ensure the academic success of the students.

The principal’s leadership actions in comprehensive teacher evaluation systems are also essential in order to provide a safe and sound learning environment for all students. In order for campus administrators to create vibrant learning environments, it is important for administrators to use the PDAS to ensure that their instructional leadership expectations are consistent with the PDAS domains to measure the implementation of all campus goals such as school safety and academic success. Moreover, consistent leadership actions to ensure the compliance with policies, procedures, and rules of the district and campus help to ensure the establishment of sound learning environments.

Staff Development and Training Planning

Utilizing comprehensive teacher evaluation systems to plan and set each of the campuses' staff development and training calendars is an effective instructional leadership action by school administrators. The findings of the present study are consistent with and support Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon's (1995) suggestion that professional development must be geared to teachers' needs and concerns. Central to this process is the identification of both inexperienced and experienced teachers who are displaying trouble in the classroom. Moreover, in successful schools, principals listen to teachers' calls for specific staff development requests made by individual teachers on the Teacher Self-Report Forms at the end of each school year. Furthermore, successful campus leaders take the time to listen to individual teacher requests for staff development and training needs to create successful schools and to maintain a successful learning community.

Principals in successful schools meet and plan annually both at the end and at the beginning of each school year with the campus administrative staffs to develop, organize, and present the campus staff development calendar of activities based upon the PDAS. Finally, it is essential for principals to connect campus staff development activities to the PDAS to ensure high levels of student academic success.

Setting Clear Expectations

One way that principals in this study used effective communication was by setting clear expectations regarding the annual teacher evaluation activities on a campus. The findings of the current study expand the findings of Blasé & Blasé (2004) that successful principals keep teachers informed of current trends and new teaching practices out in “the field” through effective communication. In an established successful school, it is important for principals to meet before the beginning of the school year to plan and organize the campus presentations to share their expectations regarding teacher evaluation procedures on the campus.

To create high performing learning environments, it is essential for principals to share the formative and summative functions of the appraisal system with teachers. To develop and promote classrooms where significant learning takes place and where students are taught to think at high cognitive levels, it is essential for principals to use the formative function of comprehensive teacher evaluation systems to increase a teacher’s performance.

Successful campus leaders at all levels effectively manage the instructional program at each school level by making well-informed contractual decisions with each teacher on a campus in order to ensure that all students are given an equal and fair opportunity to learn. To ensure this success, principals, specifically, should not hesitate to use the summative function of the PDAS to make decisions to both renew and nonrenew a teacher’s employment contract at the end of the contract year.

Multi-year Evaluation Process

Successful campus administrators in successful districts adopt multi-year teacher evaluation systems. To improve the campus climate and indirectly impact student academic achievement, it is essential for principals to adopt multi-year teacher evaluation processes for successful teachers. It is important for campus administrators to focus their efforts in regard to sound teacher evaluation by developing criteria for teachers who have demonstrated records of success documented through the evaluation system used by school districts. Furthermore, it is then equally important for principals to reward those teachers for their performance by not evaluating them every year.

In successful schools, principals create and use teacher evaluation systems where teachers who have remained at a campus for at least three consecutive years and who have performed successfully are evaluated every other year. In addition, it also is essential for principals to give these same teachers the option to choose to be evaluated yearly or every other year.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study have implications for principals in their leadership role at all three campus levels. Overall, using the PDAS as a basis for improving instruction in successful schools by monitoring instruction, providing staff development and training activities tied to the PDAS, adopting and using a multi-year teacher evaluation system, and setting clear expectations at the beginning of the year with regard to teacher

evaluation activities on each campus was found to be central to the success of the principals.

Monitoring Instruction

In order to use comprehensive teacher evaluation systems as a basis for improving instruction, principals should conduct consistent assessments of the campus instructional program by conducting walk-through observations. Principals should develop annual plans to conduct classroom visits on a scheduled daily time frame with all members of the school administration. Moreover, these daily visits need to focus on collecting data to create a picture over time of a teacher's performance in the classroom. It is imperative for the success of the teacher evaluation system for campus administrators to essentially view the PDAS as a process rather than an instrument. In addition, the routine daily classroom walk-throughs also need to focus upon ensuring that the instructional leadership plan of the campus principal is being implemented and consistently measured through the teacher evaluation system.

Connecting Annual Campus Staff Development and Training Activities to the PDAS

Planning the annual campus staff development and training activities on each of the campuses to a teacher's evaluation must be a priority for improving instruction on a campus. Principals must meet and plan annually the campus staff development calendar of activities in order to enhance teacher performance. In addition, principals should also

use the Teacher Self-Report Forms that are a part of the Professional Development and Appraisal System as a basis for determining both individual and campus staff development needs and for providing for those needs. Overall, principals at all educational levels should use any comprehensive teacher evaluation system to plan, organize, and implement the annual campus staff development program for the school.

Setting Clear Expectations Regarding Teacher Evaluation Procedures

Setting clear expectations regarding the annual teacher evaluation process and procedures must be a priority for principals who want to improve the campus instructional program by using teacher evaluation systems as a basis for improvement. Principals must meet at the beginning and at the end of each school year to develop targets, organize content regarding teacher evaluation policies, and then present new and existing teacher evaluation information to campus faculties at the beginning of each school year. It is important for principals to set clear and high expectations of teacher performance and follow through by measuring that performance through the PDAS as a basis for improving instruction.

Implementing and Integrating a Multi-year Teacher Evaluation Process

Principals must develop and maintain high teacher morale and reward effective teacher behaviors in order to maintain a successful learning environment for all students. One way that campus administrators can accomplish this goal is by adopting and integrating a multi-year teacher evaluation process. It is important for principals to

recognize a successful teacher's value by implementing a system where he or she is evaluated every other year. Moreover, principals can and should develop criteria such as successful tenure for determining a teacher's eligibility to participate in a multi-year evaluation system. Finally, principals must allow teachers who meet the criteria to choose whether or not they want to be evaluated annually.

Recommendations for Further Studies

Few studies exist regarding how elementary, middle, and high school principals use comprehensive teacher evaluation systems as a basis for improving instruction in successful schools. This study was limited to three schools—one elementary school, one middle school, and one high school and could be replicated to include additional successful schools in Texas.

Further, participants only included two principals and three assistant principals at each school level. At the high school level, the researcher could not gain access to the principal of the school and consequently had to interview one of the assistant principals. Because the high school principalship is a complex and challenging assignment, successful high school principals possess information that is valuable to studies of this kind. As a result, future studies should attempt to gain access to successful high school principals' insights regarding how they use comprehensive teacher evaluation systems to impact student academic achievement.

In addition, future studies could include schools selected by socioeconomic criteria in order to identify the commonalities and the differences in principals'

leadership actions in different settings. Also, longitudinal studies are needed regarding how principals use teacher evaluation systems as a basis for improving instruction. In addition, comparative studies of high performing versus low performing campuses and comparative studies of schools located in different socioeconomic environments are needed.

Moreover, until there is comprehensive information that describes effective instructional leadership actions regarding how principals use teacher evaluation systems as a basis for improving instruction, there will be a continued need to conduct research within the context of successful schools. By expanding the knowledge base of effective instructional leadership in the arena of comprehensive teacher evaluation systems, administrators will have information necessary to improve the instructional programs of schools at all three levels—elementary, middle, and high school.

Problematic Areas Suggest the Need for Further Research

The findings from this study suggest the need for further research in several problematic areas regarding comprehensive teacher evaluation systems. First, the participants from this study did not appear to recognize the problem with a teacher evaluation system that was both summative and formative. Further studies regarding these two particular uses of the PDAS need to be conducted in order to highlight the ways that successful principals use teacher evaluation systems to achieve both functions within one system.

Additionally, studies of this kind need to also focus upon successful principals' perceptions regarding the use of teacher evaluation systems for determining merit pay. Findings from this study revealed that principals did not recognize the strong factor of collegiality that is a part of teaching and that affects evaluation for merit pay purposes. Future studies need to focus on teacher evaluation systems that are tied to compensation in order to determine the impact to teacher collegiality.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Letter of Introduction to Administrators

August 29, 2004

Principal or Assistant Principal
School Address

Dear Principal:

My name is Alfredo Ramirez, Jr. I am a former employee of the Metropolis Independent School District of eight years. I worked both as a secondary English teacher for four years and as a middle and high school assistant principal. I am currently the director of human resources for Urban ISD in North, Texas.

In June of 2001, I left Youngstown and Metropolis ISD to begin working on a doctoral degree (Ph.D.) at the University of Texas at Austin in the Cooperative Superintendency Program (CSP) Cycle XIV. I am now finishing that program, and I would like a small amount of your time to interview you to complete my dissertation.

The title of my study is *Elementary, Middle, and High School Principals' Perceptions Regarding the Professional Development and Appraisal System in Successful Schools in Texas*. For the purposes of this study, I have identified three successful schools at all three levels (one elementary, one middle, and one high school), and I would like to interview the principal at each one of these campuses. Under your leadership, Recognized Middle School has performed at a successful level as reflected by the state accountability rating system.

Consequently, I would like to interview you for my study due to the experience, knowledge, and perceptions about the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS) that you can provide. I am perfectly aware of your busy schedule. Therefore, I am estimating to need no more than a one-time 45-minute interview. The only anticipated exception would be the need to conduct a follow up interview to ask any follow up questions or ask you to verify the accuracy of the data collected, a process known as member checking.

The approval to conduct this study in Metropolis ISD is pending approval from the MISD's Communications Office. In anticipation of that approval, I would like to know if I might interview you and the date(s) and time(s) when you are available for an interview. Upon the approval from the communications office, I will call or e-mail you

to confirm your interview. I am available to conduct the interview at any time that you are available.

Please e-mail me to let me know if I may interview you as well as the time and date that you are available. I will wait for your response.

Respectfully,

Alfredo Ramirez, Jr.
Cooperative Superintendency Program (CSP)
Cycle XIV
The University of Texas at Austin

APPENDIX B

Principal and Assistant Principal Interview Questions

I. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND APPRAISAL SYSTEM (PDAS)

1. To start off, I'd like to ask you some questions about your role as a campus principal in the implementation of the PDAS.
 - A. Tell me about your role in the implementation of the PDAS.
 - B. Who else is involved in the implementation of the PDAS on this campus?
 - C. What specific actions do you take regarding teacher evaluation on this campus?

II. SUPPORT FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

1. Now, I would like to ask you some questions about the forms and sources of support for teacher professional development as a result of their annual PDAS evaluations.
 - A. As a successful instructional leader in a Texas public school, do you provide teachers with opportunities for professional growth as a result of their annual evaluations?
 - B. If so, what types of ongoing staff development opportunities do you provide teachers when recommendations are made as a result of their annual evaluations?
 - C. Do these activities reflect the mission and goals of the campus that you identified as an instructional leader?

III. PERCEIVED POTENTIAL BENEFITS

1. Now, I would like to ask you some questions about the perceived potential benefits of using the PDAS as an instructional leadership tool?
 - A. If effectively implemented, do you perceive the PDAS to be an effective component of your instructional leadership as the campus principal?

- B. If so, exactly what leadership actions do supervisors perform as part of conducting annual PDAS evaluations?

IV. PITFALLS

- 1. Finally, I would like to ask you some questions about the potential pitfalls you perceive of using a comprehensive teacher evaluation system such as the PDAS.
 - A. As an instructional leader, do you perceive the PDAS as having several pitfalls associated with the system?
 - B. If so, what are the pitfalls that you perceive to be associated with the use of a comprehensive teacher evaluation system such as the PDAS?
 - C. How do you overcome those pitfalls?

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VITA

Alfredo Ramirez, Jr. was born in Laredo, Texas, on December 15, 1970, the son of Norma San Miguel Ramirez and Alfredo Ramirez. After graduating from Martin High School in the Laredo Independent School District, he attended Laredo Junior College (currently Laredo Community College) and Laredo State University (currently Texas A&M International University) where he earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English and Political Science with Secondary Certification. He taught English language arts at United South Junior High School (currently United South Middle School) and Salvador Garcia Middle School in Laredo with the United Independent School District. In May of 1998, he received his Master of Science Degree in Educational Administration. Upon completing his fourth year as a classroom teacher, he became a secondary assistant principal for four years in the United Independent School District. In 2001, he was selected as a Fellow in the Cooperative Superintendency Program at The University of Texas at Austin and completed his Ph.D. in the spring of 2005. During the Fellowship, he worked in the Division of Continuing Education at the Texas Education Agency and upon completion of that Fellowship, for a short time, as an assistant principal in the Manor Independent School District in Austin, Texas. He is currently the Executive Director of Human Resources in the Del Valle Independent School District and resides in Austin, Texas.

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